Football Euro 2000: Sweden 2 England 1

England stumble at the first hurdle

David Lacey in Stockholm

GLENN HODDLE's England team is beginning to dissolve before his eyes. Just how soluble his interest in remaining England's coach proves to be may well depend on the next match, at home to Bulgaria on October 10.

No sooner had England begun their attempt to qualify for the 2000 European Championship by losing 2-1 to Sweden last Saturday than Hoddle was being crossexamined about the possibility of his returning to the Premiership as manager.

Hoddle trotted out the standard line about having two years to go on his present contract and that talks with the Football Association about an extension were pending; and that if every England manager whose team performed badly in September were to walk out, the post would have changed hands a couple of dozen times by now.

Nevertheless the present incumbent has had easily the worst weekend since he took over from Terry Venables two years ago. Apart from anything else Hoddle is the first England manager-coach to lose an opening qualifier. David Seaman was not wholly to blame for Sweden's goals but he was partly at fault with both, just as he had been in Rotterdam five years earlier when Holland beat Graham Taylor's team 2-0 in the World Cup qualifier. This was England's first defeat in an away qualifier since then.

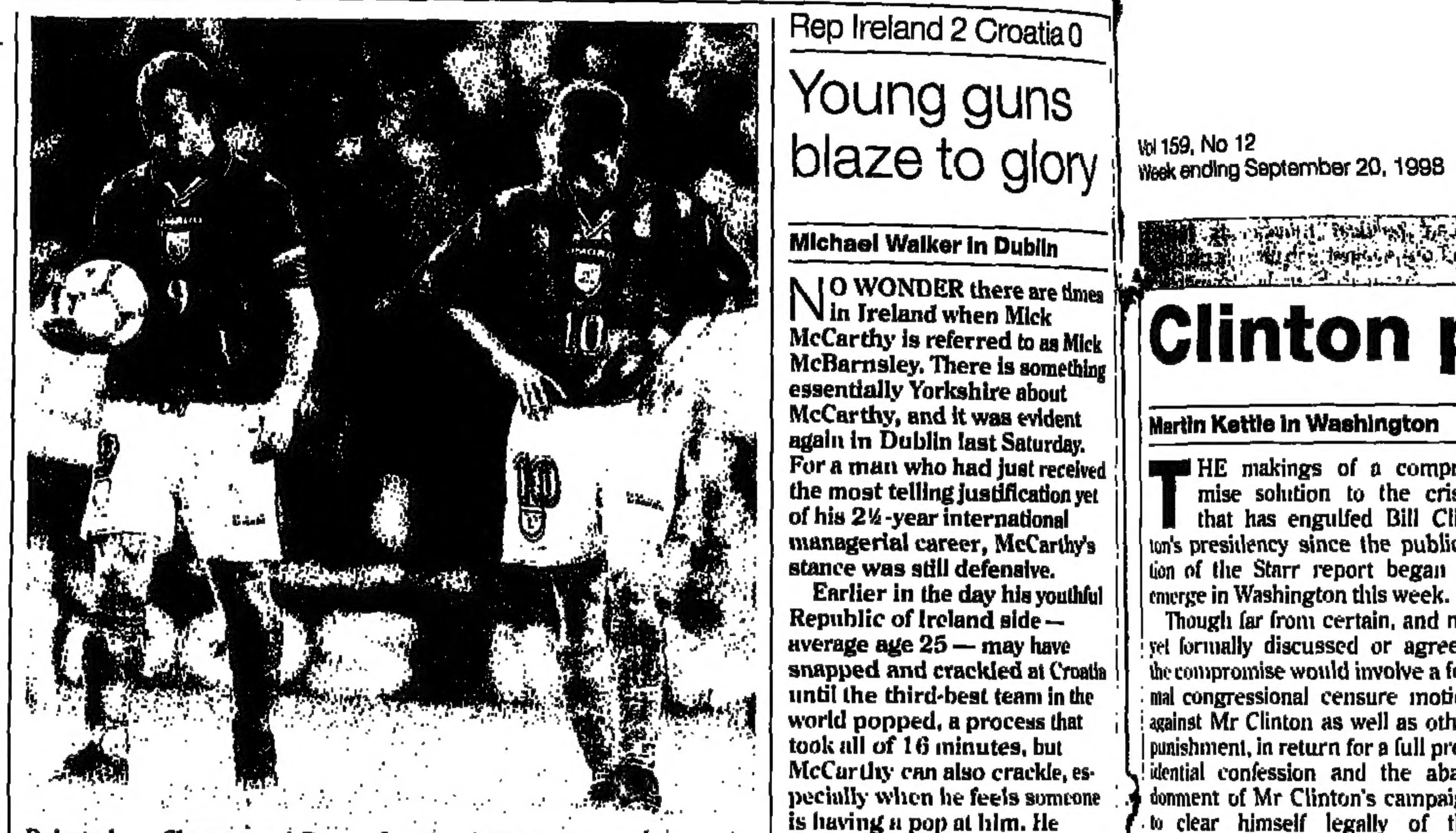
In front of Seaman, Hoddle's defence pitched and tossed around a floundering Tony Adams. Sol Campbell, eventually forced off with a hip injury, and Gareth Southgate were able to cover his mistakes up to a point, but yet again the ball was rarely played from the back to any constructive purpose.

In attack, the reluctance of Michael Owen, ineffective after an early caution for a two-footed foul on Patrik Andersson, to drop deeper to link up the play *à la* Teddy Sheringham did not help the persevering Alan Shearer, and both strikers lacked decent service.

Systems are only as good as the players within them, and the principal reason England lost, having taken the lead after a mere 74 seconds, is that too many individual performances fell way below par.

When a hitherto humdrum Swedish side suddenly scored twice around the half-hour mark Hoddle's team failed to respond, the passing fell apart, the opposition chased and tackled like demons thereafter and the dismissal of Paul Ince after 66 minutes left England to save the game with 10 men.

Ince was the second England player to be sent off in internationals in successive matches. While he will not experience the vilification suffered by David Beckham, Ince's behaviour was no less reprehensible.



Dejected . . . Shearer and Owen after the defeat in Stockholm

All three goals in the match punished poor goalkeeping. Magnus Hedman, having lined up the wall for Shearer's free-kick, promptly stood behind it and was beaten by a shot in off the far post.

After 30 minutes the strength of Stefan Schwarz's free-kick surprised Seaman, who could only push it out to Andreas Andersson. His mis-hit shot took a deflection off Adams and then spun into the net despite a second attempt by Seaman to keep it out. Two minutes later Pontus Kaamark's centre ricocheted off Scholes, and Johan Mjallby scored with a header which might have been prevented by Seaman being quicker off his line.

Mjallby and the 21-year-old Fredrik Ljungberg, whose speed and ability to find space near goal plagued England for most of the match, were the evening's outstanding players.

Other home nations also got off to a dismal start in their qualifying campaign. Wales went down 2-0 to Italy at Anfield, Northern Ireland got a 3-0 roasting from Turkey in Istanbul, and Scotland's veterans could only manage a goalless draw against Lithuania in Vilnius.

Rep Ireland 2 Croatia 0

Young guns blaze to glory

Michael Walker in Dublin

NO WONDER there are times in Ireland when Mick McCarthy is referred to as Mick McBarnsley. There is something essentially Yorkshire about McCarthy, and it was evident again in Dublin last Saturday. For a man who had just received the most telling justification yet of his 2½-year international managerial career, McCarthy's stance was still defensive.

Earlier in the day his youthful Republic of Ireland side — average age 25 — may have snapped and crackled at Croatia until the third-best team in the world popped, a process that took all of 16 minutes, but McCarthy can also crackle, especially when he feels someone is having a pop at him. He clearly feels that is the case; he may be half right.

The Irish press, while no way comparable to their British tabloid cousins, are less deferential towards McCarthy than they were to his predecessor Jack Charlton, with McCarthy's tactics and selection policy during the failed World Cup qualifying campaign scrutinised in a manner Charlton's never were.

"I've had lots of highs and there have been lows, but I've always said that when we had a full squad we would be a force to be reckoned with," McCarthy said after the latest victory. "And that was my full squad."

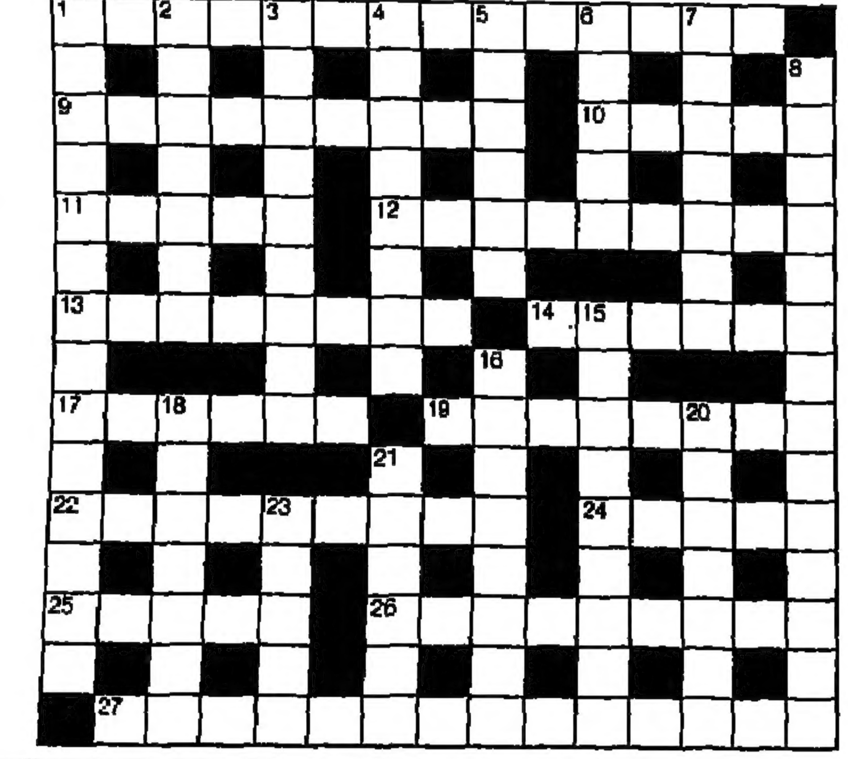
Qualification for the Euro 2000 finals from a tricky group would be a major accomplishment, and three of the hardest points are pocketed already. Another win in Yugoslavia next month followed by three points at home to Malta four days later would leave the Irish with a real sense of anticipation.

McCarthy would deserve huge credit, although so too would the supine Croatia. They were third best here all right — behind the Irish and the atmosphere. The suspicion was quickly confirmed that, missing the twin totems of Slaven Bilic and Davor Suker, the rest would go absent without leave if the Irish started fast.

There had already been evidence of Croat timidity when Denis Irwin was tripped by Krunoslav Jurcic for a fourth-minute penalty, one which Irwin coolly steered in, Zvonimir Boban was to be seen expressing limp dissatisfaction just prior to Roy Keane heading the crucial second goal 12 minutes later. Thereafter Keane was the most mature Irish presence in the ground — a rare occurrence.

The two-goal cushion meant that the injury to Keith O'Neill was less significant than it otherwise might have been. Shay Given had to make only two saves — and the Irish did not fully relax until Jurcic and Mario Stanic were sent off later on for three fouls in quick succession on Steve Staunton. Two-nil up against nine men, and even McCarthy looked relaxed.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

1 Minute full of inferences (14)
9 Strange creature in a river, crazy and sick with love (9)
10 Gold that's authentic turns black (5)
11 Bear that is pointed to by big one (5)
12 Scenes with law-breaker reveal a good king (9)
13 Died having got old, about a hundred, being in the way (8)
14 Poems on South African port (6)
17 No way this chap outside the firm can be facetious (6)
19 Died to drink, born to eat — a bit of a roll (8)
22 Language with a thin end? (9)
24 City of the inconclusive mathematician (5)
25 Musical ending to Fellini's film (5)
26 Cultivate one small amount all the rest of my life (4,1,4)
27 Witch's cat, shape indeterminate, finding look-out room here? (5,4,5)

Down

1 The most frequent winner in first-past-the-post affairs (8,6)
2 Memory had Lupus in jungle losing its heart to him (7)
3 Not enough to overtake in the subway (9)
4 Refuse to include little person out of obstinacy (4-4)
5 One lot of drinks for all in the neighbourhood (6)
6 A bit of paint in gentle hue (5)
7 Prayer to make languages with no repeated letters (7)
8 A plot's innocent victim — it was Byzantine (14)
15 Roman god retaining incomplete system finds Dream lover (9)
16 Kelly's clown forbidding alteration of dial (8)
18 Playgirl Lawrence left standing? (7)
20 Potter's place as true revolutionary getting the breeze up (7)
21 Gilbertian suicide taken to Italian mountain? (6)
23 Is 1 across a boy's name? (5)

Last week's solution

SCREED CUCKOO
A P I A O B
FATUOUS RONDEAU
E A C C I I S N
WETTHEBABYSHEAD
I O S R T E
NINE DAYSWONDER
N I B K O N I T
UNCLEREMUS MUSH
M T T A T E
BIRTHDAYHONOURS
E O E K D S R E
RIPOSTE OCEANIA
E D L W L A
ARCANA NIMBLE

Football results

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP: Qualifying:

Group One: Belarus 0, Denmark 0; Wales 0, Italy 2.

Group Two: Georgia 1, Albania 0; Greece 2, Slovenia 2; Norway 1, Latvia 3.

Group Three: Finland 3, Moldova 2; Turkey 3, N Ireland 0.

Group Four: Armenia 3, Andorra 1; Iceland 1, France 1; Ukraine 3, Russia 2.

Group Five: Bulgaria 0, Poland 3; Sweden 2, England 1.

Group Six: Austria 1, Israel 1; Cyprus 3, Spain 2.

Group Seven: Hungary 1, Portugal 3; Slovakia 3, Azerbaijan 0.

Group Eight: Macedonia 4, Malta 0; Rep Ireland 2, Croatia 0.

Group Nine: Bos-Herz 0, Estonia 1; Lithuania 0, Scotland 0; Faroe Is 0, Czech Rep 1.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Birminghm 1, Bury 0; Huddersfld 1, Sheff Utd 0; Oxford Utd 3, Portsmouth 0; Stockport 2, Grimsby 0; Swindon 3, Bristol City 2.

Division Two: Blackpool 2, Northmptn 1; Bristol R 2, Preston 2; Chesterfld 1, Gillingham 0; Lincoln 1, Oldham 3; Luton 1, Burnley 0; Notts Co 0, Wigan 1; Stoke 2, Bournemth 0; Wrexham 2, Macclesfld 1; York 1, Colchester 2.

Division Three: Barnet 1, Peterboro 9; Brighton 1, Swansea 0; Cambridge 2, Scarboro 3; Cardiff 1, Plymouth 0; Exeter 0, Chester 1; Hull 2, Brentford 3; Leyton O 2, Carlisle 1; Mansfield 0, Darlington 1; Rochdale 1, Shrewsbry 0; Sc'thorpe 2, Torquay 0; Southend 3, Rotherham 0.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
First Division: Ayr 2, Hamilton 3; Clydebank 2, Hibernian 2; Raith 0, Morton 0; St Mirren 0, Falkirk 2; Stranraer 1, Airdrie 2.

Second Division: Forfar 2, Clyde 2; Livingston 3, East Fife 1; Partick 1, Alloa 0; Stirling A 1, Queen Sth 0; Invrnss CT 2, Arbroath 1.

Third Division: Berwick 0, Ross Co 2; Cowdnbth 0, Brechin 1; E Stirling 1, Dumbarton 2; Montrose 1, Albion 2; Queens Pk 0, Stenhsmr 0.

The Guardian Weekly

Vol 159, No 12
Week ending September 20, 1998

The Washington Post · Le Monde

Clinton parlays deal to stay in power

Martin Kettle in Washington

THE makings of a compromise solution to the crisis that has engulfed Bill Clinton's presidency since the publication of the Starr report began to emerge in Washington this week.

Though far from certain, and not yet formally discussed or agreed, the compromise would involve a formal congressional censure motion against Mr Clinton as well as other punishment, in return for a full presidential confession and the abandonment of Mr Clinton's campaign to clear himself legally of the charges in the report, submitted to Congress late last week by Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel.

The deal, if approved by all sides, would enable Mr Clinton to carry on, although with reduced authority, until his term of office ends in January 2001.

The president is believed to have discussed the possibility of some kind of "plea bargain" with Congress in a 20-minute telephone conversation with the Senate judiciary committee chairman, Republican Orrin Hatch, last Sunday.

"There's going to be some sort of sanction here," said Senator Hatch. "The question is what — from impeachment to censure to rebuke to condemnation, or what."

The suggestions of a compromise came as Washington continued to try to come to terms with the awesome political and constitutional implications of the decision by the House of Representatives to begin formal consideration of 11 Starr accusations against the president.

These include perjury, witness tampering and obstruction of justice, allegedly committed in Mr Clinton's efforts to cover up his sexual relationship with a former White House worker, Monica Lewinsky.

In the absence of any agreement to strike a bargain, the White House continued to attack Mr Starr's 445 pages of findings as "a hit-and-run smear campaign", while some Republicans declared that Mr Clinton should face impeachment over the findings.

Last weekend the White House published a line-by-line rebuttal of the independent counsel's actual text, which was posted on the Internet by the House of Representatives judiciary committee. The report describes in graphic and embarrassing detail Mr Clinton's alleged sexual encounters with Ms Lewinsky in the White House.

"It is plain that 'sex' is precisely what this 4½-year investigation has boiled down to," the White House's 42-page rebuttal said, denying that any misdeed of any substance had been found by Mr Starr.

But the general tone of Washington's wall-to-wall weekend television punditry — as well as of new opinion polls — was that a deal is there to be struck, if all sides want it enough.

Two senior Republicans, whose party controls both houses of Congress, held out the possibility of a solution. Senator Hatch called on the president to "level with the American people" by abandoning his claim not to have lied under oath in his grand jury evidence and in an affidavit he gave earlier this year — in the Paula Jones case — where he denied sexual relations with Ms Lewinsky. And the Senate majority leader, Trent Lott, said Mr Clinton was "continuing the very things that got him in trouble — legal niceties, and trying to explain problems that can't just be dismissed".

But the phrase in Mr Lott's comments that sparked immediate speculation about a compromise deal came when he added: "He may need to come to the Congress and say, you know, how can this be resolved? But if he begins the process with attacks, and says this [Starr report] is just a smear, that doesn't help."

Two of Mr Clinton's former close colleagues have said they support a censure-motion compromise. Mr Clinton's former adviser, George Stephanopoulos, said that the way out could be censure plus a fine, as happened to the House Speaker, Newt Gingrich, fined $300,000 last year over an ethics violation.

The former labour secretary, Robert Reich, who has a 30-year friendship with Mr Clinton, also called for censure. "There's not going to be impeachment," Mr Reich said. "My presumption is that he's going to be censured. The question is how to get beyond this. There has to be acknowledgment that you can't go around lying."

The emerging interest in censure came as the latest opinion polls showed a desire for some form of severe action against Mr Clinton but reluctance to back impeachment. This could change if evidence of more liaisons emerges.

The opinion polls, which will hold the key to Congress's political calculations, continued to show strong support for Mr Clinton on Monday. A Gallup poll taken last Sunday showed his job approval rating rising to 64 per cent, and public opinion consolidating in support of censure, not impeachment.

Mr Starr's $40 million investigation set out four years ago to look at Mr Clinton's business dealings in Arkansas when he was state governor, but switched to the Lewinsky affair after his Whitewater dealings yielded no evidence of wrong-doing.

Shoulder to shoulder . . . The Clintons leave for New York, where the president addressed the global economic crisis PHOTO: RON EDMONDS

Comment, pages 6,7,12
Washington Post, page 15

G7 nations act to head off global crisis

Alex Brummer and Mark Atkinson

THE world's leading industrial countries set the stage for an international cut in interest rates, after President Clinton warned on Monday that the global economy was confronted with "the biggest financial challenge facing the world in a half century".

The extraordinary change in policy — from fighting inflation to stimulating growth — by the leading industrial countries came after a series of meetings from London to Basle and Washington designed to end the crisis in world markets.

Gordon Brown, Britain's chancellor who is chairman of the Group of Seven finance ministers, left for Japan on Tuesday to press Tokyo to stimulate growth and clean up the country's banking system.

In their unprecedented intervention, the G7 finance ministers and central bankers signalled a new approach to dealing with their economies and those of the developing countries. The prospect of lower interest rates and emergency measures to shore up crumbling financial markets sent the FTSE share index in London up 150 points and added more than 200 points to the Dow Jones index in New York.

Emerging markets which, like Malaysia, sought to go it alone by imposing capital controls were told by the G7 that such action would "hurt prospects for their own economies and the world system".

The G7 also rounded on traders in the world's financial markets, and accused dealers of being irrational by not making a distinction between countries "carrying out strong macroeconomic policies" and those operating more irresponsible regimes.

Monday night's meeting was a prelude to an emergency gathering of G8 leaders, including Russia, at which a report outlining proposals for putting the Russian economy back on track will be discussed.

The crisis in Moscow, coming hard on the heels of the Asian meltdown, has delivered a sharp blow to the economies of Latin America, with Brazil raising its interest rates to 50 per cent to protect the real.

The G7 said that in the West the emphasis would now be on boosting demand rather than worrying about rising prices.

Finance, page 19

Introducing Le Monde Diplomatique

Patrick Ensor, Editor

INSIDE this week's issue we are delighted to include a specially prepared English edition of Le Monde Diplomatique, a French monthly with a lively readership and well merited reputation for serious journalism.

The Diplo speaks to its readers in many languages, but this is the first time it is reaching out to the English-speaking world.

Over the next two months we will be including two more free issues of Le Monde Diplomatique with your Guardian Weekly. We hope its thoughtful, analytical approach to the news will appeal to you as much as it does to us.

Among this month's notable contributors are Noam Chomsky on Washington's role in General Suharto's fall, and Edward Said on the Palestinian question. Other topics include the growing threat of bioterrorism and the the remorseless rise of the United States' jail population.

The next issue of Le Monde Diplomatique will appear on October 25, and then, with the last trial issue on November 22, we will invite you to tell us what you think of it, and whether you like it enough to take out an enhanced subscription to the Guardian Weekly that includes Le Monde Diplomatique. Your current subscription will be unaffected if you want to continue taking just the Guardian Weekly.

Meanwhile I would be pleased to get your immediate response to our new venture. Write to me at 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ, or e-mail me at patrick.ensor@guardian.co.uk

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF60	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 600	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Unequal power struggle in the affairs of state

SUSAN FALUDI argues that during the Clinton scandals the media have attacked feminists for failing to live up to their stereotyped image as prudes (Damned if you don't, damned if you do, August 30). This is clever but specious. Her assurance that feminists have never been concerned with "the private acts of two consenting people" is misleading.

In recent years many feminists in the United States have sought to expand the definition of sexual harassment to include consensual sex between persons who occupy different levels in the office, work-site, or university hierarchy. The rationale behind these efforts was two-fold. First, feminists argued that the corrupting nature of power prevented such relationships from being truly consensual. Second, they held that these liaisons were demeaning and potentially discriminatory to other employees who might not receive the same opportunities for career advancement as those who had affairs with the boss.

President Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky was open to both these objections. There could hardly be a more unequal power relationship than one between a president and an unpaid intern.

During her affair with Mr Clinton, Ms Lewinsky became one of the few interns to receive a paid government position, despite having been repeatedly reprimanded for unprofessional attire and demeanour by her immediate supervisors at the White House. While Ms Faludi was decrying a "global consumerism" that made women feel that they could only advance by removing their clothes, she might have pondered whether Mr Clinton has not sent a similar message to young women seeking careers in the US government.
Christopher Pepus,
London

SUSAN FALUDI thinks the Clinton-Lewinsky affair is about private sexual matters and consenting adults. Rather, this affair is about power. I have been an intern, worked with interns and supervised interns. They are there to learn, work and then be evaluated. There are all kinds of reasons why a person in authority or an intern might use and abuse the imbalance of power in the relationship. There is no room for gift-giving, let alone sexual dalliance. If I behaved "inappropriately" with an intern as Bill Clinton said he did, I would be canned so fast my head would spin.

The American people are at least consistent. They must overlook the president's use of the power imbalance on a personal scale because that is what they accept on national and global scales. The reprisals in Afghanistan and Sudan were surely not to divert attention from the grand jury testimony. We are just seeing the same power imbalance played out on the large scale.
Robert Thaler,
New Hamburg, Ontario, Canada

YOU were quite correct in your editorial to suggest that President Clinton's attempt to hush up his liaison with Monica Lewinsky is not really worth an impeachment (It's Clinton's own affair, August 9). If I were a United States citizen I would be far more worried about Kenneth Starr than the president. Mr Clinton as a fibbing Lothario may be embarrassing, but Mr Starr as the smug, smirking Grand Inquisitor is downright frightening. Isn't the right to privacy one of the basic human rights, even for politicians with tawdry sex-lives?
Siria Mitchell,
Tartu, Estonia

Canada in a no-win situation

STEVEN PEARLSTEIN said that Canada's supreme court judgment on the right for Quebec to unilaterally declare its independence was a legal victory for the Prime Minister's Jean Chrétien's government (Court sets rules for Quebec secession, August 30). It could have been a victory only if achieving a Unilateral Declaration of Independence is the objective of Quebec's secessionist movement. What if the objective is more about reforming Canada's federation to make it similar to what the European Union is becoming: a group of independent states linked together by a free economic market?

Mr Chrétien has hardly won anything with this decision. His government is now legally obliged to negotiate with Quebec if the province chooses to secede, something that the federal government had previously refused to do. The supreme court's opinion is part of the Chrétien government's Plan B, which intends to bring to the fore a plethora of legal and financial problems that would befall Quebeckers if they voted "yes" in a future referendum. So far this approach has only further polarised both camps on this emotive subject.

The idea of asking the court's opinion about Quebec's right to secede was questioned from day one. How much objectivity could be expected from an institution whose mandate is the protection of the Canadian constitution? Most people in Canada, especially in Quebec, would argue that this is a political debate and therefore has no place in the legal arena. The supreme court judges themselves agreed.

Everyone is expecting the Quebec secessionist movement to fade into the background. Why aren't the other provinces interested in reforming the constitution in order to make Canada a modern place to live for all of its people?
Loic Charbonneau,
Quebec City, Quebec, Canada

Taking the sting out of debt

WHILE agreeing with your editorial on the need for faster and deeper debt cancellation in the world's most impoverished countries (War on the poor, August 30), I am concerned that an overemphasis on debt relief can give the false impression that simply cancelling the debts of developing countries will make the poor better off. Debt relief will only help eradicate poverty if it is coupled with policies within developing countries that work towards making improvements in poor peoples' lives, such as improved access to clean water, sanitation and health facilities, improved communications systems that allow people to get their goods to markets, etc.

Unfortunately, it appears that, under pressure from institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, developing countries are increasingly leaving it up to the market to decide who benefits from whatever money is around. In such circumstances it is likely that debt relief will contribute mainly towards improving the position of the better off in developing countries, thus increasing the already growing disparity between the rich and the poor. The poor will continue to be denied hope of a better tomorrow.
Paul Edwards,
Dodoma, Tanzania

THOUGH welcome, cancellation of a mere $2 billion of debt will do little to alleviate poverty in the Third World. The problems are deep-rooted and need the kind of determined effort that has driven the European project over the past 50 years.

Experience shows that without a more interventionist approach from the world's richest countries, much of the money saved will be spent on prestige projects, including arms purchases, further strengthening the economic power of the donor countries. Corruption at the highest levels will ensure that a significant percentage finds its way into the pockets of politicians and their cronies, ultimately for the purchase of luxury goods from the developed world.

Even if a government is determined to spend the money wisely, it faces enormous problems of the kind Western politicians and economists find difficult to comprehend.

So far the rich countries have tried only superficial solutions to the problem of world poverty. Much of the "aid" has merely served to subsidise industry in the donor countries. To achieve real progress, they must find the political will to donate huge sums to the poor. Not loans, because there is no prospect of repayment until the unsustainable peasant lifestyle is transformed. Sadly, world leaders show little sign of rising to the challenge.
K L May,
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Russia's unfree market system

THE chaos in Russia is not the fault of free markets but of criminal ones. The problem is political: the state has proved too weak to control its usurping robber-baron business oligarchies. These ruthless plutocrats blame liberals for the harm caused in fact by their own widespread mafia practices, knowing all the while that discrediting the idea of free markets will consolidate their position as monopolists. The West is in danger of being taken in.

A properly functioning system of free markets means that even market leaders are subject to competition. But no "capitalist" country has attained such a system without restricting monopolies. There is no such thing as an absolutely free market, and one can only exist when appropriate legislation seeks to provide a level playing field.

The International Monetary Fund was not wrong in its prescriptions, but in lending money with no guarantee that those prescriptions would be followed. This was ultimately a political decision, taken to appease Russia. This relationship has satisfied no one as the West has lost money and Russians resent a perceived loss of independence. Putting it right is a delicate and critical — political — problem.
Nick Martin-Clark,
London

Briefly

I SHARE Victoria Brittain's horror at Laurent Kabila's apparent call on the Congolese to take up bows and arrows, machetes and spears to kill Tutsis (September 6).

However, her claim that only four African political movements have stood out against tribalism is plainly wrong. Kenneth Kaunda's Humanist movement was clearly not tribal; Kwame Nkrumah's pan-Africanist movement was anything but. Many countries, such as Ghana, Guinea-Conakry and South Africa, recognise several native languages officially.

To imply that all but four countries on the continent can be equated with Mr Kabila's call to kill misrepresents the efforts being made by many politicians and most ordinary citizens to have ethnic differences recognised at the same time as eliminating tribalism.
Carlos Palin,
La Paz, Bolivia

RICHARD Norton-Taylor does a good job of exposing the hypocrisy of not only the UK government, but of all Western governments in acting against "terrorism" (September 6).

Lord Lloyd's definition of terrorism might have unexpected consequences for certain parties: "The use or threat of violence to intimidate or coerce a government, the public or any section of the public, in order to promote political, social or ideological objectives". Not just Nelson Mandela and the ANC, but the US government's actions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan (the list goes on) or even the UK government's policies in Northern Ireland until recently do not appear too far adrift of these words, do they?
Nick Horn,
Canberra, Australia

THOMAS W Lippman reports United States government undercover plans to topple Iraq's Saddam Hussein (August 9). If true, isn't it dangerous interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state? Or does it make a difference to the US (and its Western soulmates) that Iraq, like Grenada or Panama, is a non-European Third World country? US efforts may not be entirely illegal in international law, but are certainly on the brink.
Paul Caspersz,
Kandy, Sri Lanka

YOU try to live a decent life. You refuse to buy the Times or the Sun because of their proprietor. You won't subscribe to BSkyB because you refuse to put money into Rupert Murdoch's pocket. Then he goes and buys your football team (September 13). What can you do?
Martin B Crookall,
Stockport, Lancs

The Guardian Weekly

September 20, 1998 Vol 159 No 12

Annual subscription rates are £49 United Kingdom; £55 Europe inc. Eire, USA and Canada; £63 Rest of World.
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Primakov takes charge in Russia

James Meek in Moscow

YEVGENY Primakov effectively laid claim to the leadership of Russia last week in a confident speech to parliament which assured his overwhelming endorsement as the country's new prime minister.

Mr Primakov, aged 68 — formerly a spy chief and foreign minister — was launched into office by the Duma on an acclamatory 317 to 63 vote. Fifteen MPs abstained.

His performance, ranging deep into areas previously considered the preserve of President Boris Yeltsin — such as foreign affairs and relations with regional leaders — was that of a head of state rather than the sort of superannuated bureaucrat Russian prime ministers have been until now.

There is bound to be unease in the Yeltsin camp at the enormous power that Mr Primakov now wields. Mr Yeltsin himself went on television to support him as "the candidate of accord" whose emergence had prevented "a serious political crisis".

However, Mr Primakov's honeymoon with the politicians who brought him to power ended on Monday as the liberal Yabloko movement and the Communist party distanced themselves from the increasingly contradictory aims of the new prime minister's government.

Yabloko's leader, Grigory Yavlinsky, without whom Mr Primakov would never have risen so far so fast, turned down a job in the new cabinet, saying sarcastically that it would make him "second first deputy prime minister".

The post, he said, would put him into direct conflict with the "first first deputy prime minister", Yuri Maslyukov, a Communist who believes the solution to Russia's economic crisis are protectionism and rapid, cheap rouble loans to industry.

"The government shouldn't be a debating club, and conflict within the cabinet is impermissible in the present circumstances," Mr Yavlinsky said.

Despite Mr Maslyukov's leading role in Mr Primakov's plans, the Communists too are wary of identifying themselves too closely with the new regime.

The three-party alliance which the Communists lead said in a statement that it would not be putting forward candidates for the government and would concentrate its energies on a day of protest on October 7 to demand Mr Yeltsin's resignation.

Already, with his government barely half-formed — Mr Primakov said he would have a full list by the end of the week — serious disagreements are emerging on such core policy issues as whether to increase the rouble supply, stoking inflation, or stick to the tight-fisted supply-side policies which have kept a trickle of International Monetary Fund credits coming at the expense of an economy sucked dry of liquidity.

Viktor Gerashchenko, the new head of the Russian central bank and a figure regarded with ill-disguised contempt in Western financial circles, has already said there will need to be a "small, controlled" injection of roubles into the economy to pay off debts and compensate Russians for the collapse of the currency.

He was directly contradicted this week by the acting finance minister, Mikhail Zadornov, who is likely to keep his job. "We would prefer not to resort to central bank credits," he said.

Addressing his first cabinet meeting, Mr Primakov soothed, stirred and reassured but was short on specifics. He talked of "extraordinary measures" to solve the problem of wage and pension arrears "once and for all". But he did not say what they might be.

He denied that the new government would be communist, or even centre-left, or would seek to isolate Russia from the rest of the world, saying it would be "a national and a patriotic government, which must be concerned for Russia's interests".

He spoke harshly of the "shock therapy" policies of his predecessors — Yegor Gaidar, Viktor Chernomyrdin and Sergei Kiriyenko.

"If the 'therapy' stretches out for almost a decade and there's no sign of improvement, then of course it's not in the interests of the country or the people," he said.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 16

Congo peace talks fail amid acrimony

Andrew Meldrum in Victoria Falls

THE summit of seven African presidents aimed at stopping the war in Congo lurched from near breakthrough last week, with a peace plan ready for signing, to breakdown when the Congolese rebels abruptly quit the talks.

The negotiations at the Victoria Falls resort in Zimbabwe ended in a stalemate, with the leaders managing only to agree to a ceasefire in principle, which appears not to be holding.

The rebel representatives left the summit after being blocked from holding direct talks with the man they are fighting to oust — Congo's president, Laurent Kabila.

"They will only know we exist when we start shooting," said the rebel leader, Bizima Karaha. One of his colleagues added: "We are going back home now to do one thing only: to intensify our campaign against Kabila."

Recriminations between officials of countries at the summit added to the gloomy outlook: charges of genocide, ethnic violence, treachery and lying were exchanged following the close of the talks.

Ministers of defence of the seven countries at the summit — Congo and its allies, Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe, as well as Uganda and Rwanda supporting the rebels on the other side, and Zambia taking a neutral stance — have so far been unable to bring the warring factions into an agreement.

This week southern African presidents meeting in Mauritius were faced with a dramatic military escalation of the conflict. Mass killings of Tutsis, expressly ordered by Mr Kabila, have reportedly occurred in western and eastern Congo.

Meanwhile evidence has emerged that Congo is mobilising and arming forces in preparation for carrying the war into Rwanda and Uganda.

People struggle through floodwater in Tangail, near the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka, last week. Nearly 1,000 people are believed to have died in the flooding as troops and volunteers battle to maintain embankments. The waters are reported to be receding, but food and medicine are short PHOTO: PAVEL RAHMAN

Chaos as mass fury sweeps Cambodia

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Kuala Lumpur

POPULAR fury swept over Phnom Penh last week as security forces shot Buddhist monks and beat demonstrators in increasingly chaotic and futile efforts to stifle anti-government protests breaking out around the Cambodian capital.

The explosion of mass protest involving mainly students and young people showed the seething popular frustration with a victory by the prime minister, Hun Sen, in an election blessed by the European Union as free and fair but widely seen by Cambodians as fraudulent.

Security forces were reported to have killed at least one Buddhist monk, possibly two, and wounded others when they opened fire on a crowd of demonstrators sitting in front of the United States embassy.

The running battles between police and demonstrators came a day after troops tore down the tent city that had grown in so-called Democracy Square, a park in front of Cambodia's parliament.

Mr Hun Sen had said that he would use force to end two weeks of protest against perceived election cheating. Instead, he has ignited the worst violence since the bloody coup he staged a year ago, and has provoked an outburst of anger unprecedented in almost a quarter of a century.

Police and troops surrounded several Buddhist temples and schools to prevent leaflets being circulated by a monks' organisation calling on people to rise up and overthrow Mr Hun Sen.

"Everyone thought the monks were safe," commented one Phnom Penh resident in a telephone interview. "People are saying they haven't seen these kind of open attacks [on monks] since the Khmer Rouge."

Sam Rainsy and Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the opposition leaders who organised and supported the Democracy Square protest, kept up the pressure by applying for permission to lead further demonstrations.

Mr Rainsy continues to shelter at the office of the United Nations representative after Mr Hun Sen ordered his arrest for alleged complicity in a grenade attack on the prime minister's city residence. But independent observers believe that any move to detain Mr Rainsy could, in the words of one analyst, "leave this city burning".

Meanwhile King Norodom Sihanouk warned the two opposition leaders that their parties would be expelled from the national assembly if they did not attend by next week.

The Week

EUROPEAN observers strongly criticised the management of Bosnia's general election as voters waited to see if the weekend poll would reduce the grip of hardline nationalists. Some 200,000 voters could not find their names on the register and had to be given special ballot forms. Washington Post, page 16

ISRAELI security forces were on maximum alert after an Islamist group vowed revenge after two of its most senior activists, Imad and Adel Awadallah, were shot dead.
Washington Post, page 16

AFGHANISTAN'S Taliban movement announced that it had recovered the bodies of nine Iranian diplomats whose disappearance had sparked tension with Tehran. A Taliban spokesman said that some its fighters were responsible for the deaths and would be punished.

THE US said it had concluded that North Korea made a failed attempt at launching a small satellite when it fired a missile last month over Japan. The rocket firing had been described by US officials as a Taepodong-1 missile that has a range of more than 1,900km.

RELATIVES of one of the 229 victims of the Swissair Flight 111 crash filed a $50-million suit against the airline in New York. The suit, alleging technical defects with the plane's wiring, is likely to be the first of many.
Obituary, page 23

BURMA'S military government detained another 187 members of Aung San Suu Kyi's democracy party. Arrests since the crackdown began in May now total 702, the party says.

VOLKSWAGEN approved a $12.5-million fund to compensate people forced into slave labour for the firm by the Nazis during the second world war.

TWENTY people were killed when a bomb exploded in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. There was no claim of responsibility, but officials suspect the Tamil Tigers.

YANG SHANGKUN, the former Chinese president who backed the violent suppression of the student movement in Tiananmen Square, has died aged 92.

GEORGE WALLACE, the racist former governor of Alabama who battled against the civil rights movement but later renounced his segregationist views, has died aged 79.

GIANNI Amelio's The Way We Laughed won the Venice Film Festival — the first Italian film to win the Golden Lion for more than a decade.
Festival report, page 27

Political violence undermines Albania

Kurt Schork in Tirana

RELATIVE calm returned to the Albanian capital, Tirana, on Tuesday after two days of political unrest and street violence that left at least three people dead and 14 wounded, witnesses said.

The unrest raised international alarm about a new threat to stability in a volatile region already shaken by the conflict in the neighbouring Yugoslav province of Kosovo, where ethnic Albanian guerrillas are fighting for independence. It followed the murder last weekend of a leading opposition MP, Azem Hajdari, and a bodyguard in Tirana.

The opposition Democratic party leader and former president, Sali Berisha, blamed the murders on the Socialist prime minister, Fatos Nano. Crowds attacked Mr Nano's office, demanding his resignation.

At the start of Hajdari's funeral on Monday, mourners were trying to bring his coffin into the prime minister's building when guards opened fire. An intense gun battle ensued and grenades were thrown.

For much of the day order appeared to have collapsed, with armed gangs roaming the centre of Tirana in cars and even in tanks commandeered from the forces sent to confront them. The violence left a swathe of destruction through the city centre, where many vehicles were set on fire and shops looted.

Mr Berisha's men took control of the parliament building and the television and radio stations in what the government said was an attempted coup.

Groups of armed men roamed the streets of the capital, some pursuing a political agenda and others using the confusion to loot and cause mayhem.

The United States condemned the upheaval and said it would not recognise a government that took power by force. The State Department called on Albania's political leadership to work with President Rexhep Meidani to forge "constructive proposals that will end the current upheaval".

On Tuesday police and army troops appeared in firm control of the main government buildings, including the parliament, state radio and television and the prime minister's office buildings. Mr Nano and his cabinet were reported safe.

Occasional bursts of automatic gunfire could be heard in the city centre, but pedestrian and vehicle traffic was returning to normal and some shops and kiosks opened.

However, an undercurrent of unresolved, potentially explosive political tension was unmistakeable. Army troops patrolled in front of the prime minister's office, a building whose flanks and rear are bullet-pocked from several attempts by opposition political forces to capture the seat of power.

Discarded shoes, abandoned umbrellas and empty ammunition cases littered the streets around the prime minister's building, remnants of turmoil not seen in Tirana since the weeks of unrest in the spring of 1997.

With the police and army apparently back in firm control of Tirana, Albania's political leaders still must arrive at some understanding of how the country is to be governed without periodic descents into chaos.

The country last came unstuck last year after a series of fraudulent pyramid investment schemes collapsed, effectively bankrupting much of the nation. — *Reuters*



Opposition protesters march in Albania's capital in the wake of the murder of Azem Hajdari
PHOTOGRAPH: HEKTOR PUSINA

Bavarians put spoke in SDP wheel

Ian Traynor in Bonn

GERHARD Schröder's hope of becoming Germany's first Social Democratic chancellor in 16 years suffered a setback last Sunday when his party failed to improve its position in a key election in Bavaria, the country's biggest state, only two weeks before the general election.

The results boosted Chancellor Helmut Kohl's hope of winning a fifth term on September 27, giving the Christian Social Union (CSU), his Bavarian ally and coalition partner, a comfortable victory in the southern state. It maintained its absolute majority with 53 per cent of the vote.

The Social Democratic party (SPD) fell to 29 per cent, slightly down on four years ago, despite the much-touted "Schröder effect", which it had hoped would help it gain up to 5 per cent in the deeply Roman Catholic and conservative state.

The Bavarian premier and CSU number two, Edmund Stoiber, claimed a triumph at the ballot box, since his party's 53 per cent was up to four points more than most opinion polls had forecast, and level with the CSU result in 1994. He had campaigned for a mandate to rule unchallenged, as the CSU has done in Bavaria since 1962.

"This is a clear slap in the face for the SPD," Mr Stoiber said, pointing out that Mr Schröder had campaigned hard in Bavaria, putting in many more appearances than Mr Kohl.

Although Mr Kohl and Mr Stoiber are uneasy allies, the Bavarian leader said that the outcome represented "an enormous boost" towards a conservative victory in a the general election.

"This is a great, magnificent vote of confidence," Mr Stoiber said. "I'm pleased that the CSU has managed to keep the extreme left and extreme right out of the parliament."

The neo-Nazi fringe party, the Republicans, gained 3.6 per cent of the vote, more than expected but still less than the 5 per cent needed to enter the state parliament in Munich.

Mr Kohl, whose Christian Democratic Union has been consistently behind the Social Democrats in the opinion polls for six months, was immensely cheered by the CSU result.

He told reporters in Bonn: "I think it's not just possible but probable that we shall be ahead of the Social Democrats on the evening of the federal election."

Although there was no doubt that the CSU would win in Bavaria, Mr Schröder had hoped to bring its vote below the 50 per cent mark, and give the SPD a few more points.

Fear as Algeria's leader quits

David Hirst in Beirut

PRESIDENT Lamine Zeroual's decision to step down before the end of his five-year term looks likely to weaken Algeria's military-based regime and further erode domestic and international confidence in its ability to end the gruesome civil war.

The shock decision, announced last weekend, has plunged the country into new confusion and uncertainty, with all political parties holding emergency meetings and warning of chaos.

The Algiers newspaper Liberté said: "Some will liken this decision to that of a captain abandoning ship as it fills with water on all sides."

In addition to the continuing Islamist terror, the regime now faces the danger of serious social unrest. The slump in oil revenues and the conversion to a free-market economy under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund have further increased unemployment.

Last week the normally submissive trade union leadership seemed to be threatening a general strike, and there are fears of a popular explosion comparable to the bloody street riots of 1988.

Mr Zeroual, who was due to serve until November 2000, said he would hand over power after presidential elections in February next year.

The upheaval echoes events in 1992 when the military annulled elections which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) looked set to win. That drove the Islamists to the violence that has continued to grow in scale and barbarism.

Mr Zeroual believes in accommodating Islamist rebels interested in a peaceful settlement who last year threw their weight behind a ceasefire between the army and the FIS's military wing, the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS). This has brought him into collision with those dominant members of the military hierarchy, the so-called eradicators, who want to crush the Islamists.

Mr Zeroual's decision to step down is reported to have come during a stormy six-hour meeting last week with top commanders headed by the chief-of-staff, Mohamed Lamari.

It was these powerful generals who, in 1994, chose him as head of state. For them he was a safe, uncontroversial figure whom they thought they could influence. But he developed a will of his own, especially after his handsome victory in the presidential elections of 1995.

The hardliners distrusted his conciliatory tendencies. Although it was they who brought off the ceasefire with the AIS, Mr Zeroual and his followers subsequently sought to turn this into a much broader political understanding with the Islamists.

Mr Zeroual's departure can be seen as a victory for the "eradicators", but hardly a definitive one. It is likely to intensify conflicts within the regime, and it is likely these will spill into the public arena if the elections in February are to be the expression of "pluralist democracy" that Mr Zeroual has called for.

Nigeria frees Ogonis

NIGERIA'S new military leader has freed a group of Ogoni minority activists, imprisoned with the executed writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and held since 1994 on charges of murdering four pro-government chiefs, it was announced last week, *writes Ian Black*.

They were released by a court in the southeastern city of Port Harcourt, in a further sign that General Abdulsalami Abubakar is pursuing relatively liberal policies.

An initial statement issued by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (Mosop) said the detainees, who numbered 20 when they were imprisoned, had been freed unconditionally. It later appeared that only 19 had come out of jail, because one had died there.

Under Saro-Wiwa's leadership, Mosop mounted a national and international campaign against pollution of the lands of the 500,000-strong Ogoni minority by the oil giant Royal Dutch/Shell in the Niger Delta.

Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogonis were executed in defiance of worldwide pleas for clemency in November 1995. Nigeria was then suspended from the Commonwealth and sanctions were imposed in a vain and politically divisive attempt to force the country back on to the democratic path.

According to Mosop, the 20 were tortured and held in solitary confinement in insanitary conditions, sharing their cells with rats, snakes and cockronches, with their only source of water a well used to dump dead inmates.

Mugabe backs off from threat to seize farms

Andrew Meldrum in Harare

ZIMBABWE'S president, Robert Mugabe, has bowed to international pressure to moderate his land redistribution policy.

Mr Mugabe has often vowed that his government would not "pay a penny for the soil" of white-owned land for the resettlement of black peasants. But at the three-day donors' conference to raise funds for land redistribution, it was accepted that white farmers would be fully compensated.

The government also agreed to demands that the reform will be carried out in a transparent and accountable manner, so that corrupt officials cannot seize land for themselves, as has happened in recent years.

Donors also asked for increased ownership of land by women, improved training of peasant farmers and an emphasis on reducing rural poverty.

The conference last week gave enthusiastic support for land reform — but little actual cash was pledged. Instead of the government's hopes for pledges of nearly $1 billion, donors carefully avoided mentioning any specific figures at all. The only firm pledge was 50 tractors promised by China.

Hanson's racist message begins to pall

Christopher Zinn in Laidley

IT COULD have been one of the high points of her campaign. Pauline Hanson was off to the historic outback town of Longreach to launch her much-hyped policy on, or rather against, Aboriginal privilege.

Her minders had promised fireworks to make the long journey worthwhile and inject some life into the otherwise listless federal election campaign, which has been dominated by tax issues.

Since her 2 per cent "Easytax" proposal had been widely rubbished, she had decided to play her trump card: the belief that black Australians get better health, legal and educational benefits than white ones.

But the self-proclaimed "Mother of Australia" managed to engineer a fiasco which owed more to pantomime than politics.

She discovered that a decision by the rival Queensland National party not to allocate her any of its votes in the preferential electoral system could make it impossible for her to win a parliamentary seat on October 3.

But her flagging personal fortunes do not mean that her anti-immigration One Nation party will not win some senate seats. The leader of the opposition Labor party, Kim Beazley, who is trailing the prime minister, John Howard, by two points in the polls, refused to write it off last weekend. "I don't think they are a spent force. I'd love to be able to say that, but I can't," he said.

It is two years since the independent MP for Oxley made her infamous maiden speech in Canberra, in which she claimed that Australia was being swamped by Asians.

Three months ago, when her fledgling party confounded the pundits by winning 11 seats in the Queensland state elections, it seemed that she was here to stay.

Last week she was working the streets of Laidley, a town an hour away from Brisbane, known as the country garden of Queensland, which lies at the heart of the new constituency of Blair, where she is standing. The opinion polls say that 35 per cent of the electorate in Blair support her, and at the cattle sales she found an appreciative audience.

But on the main street Cathy Kyle, an Aboriginal, was almost shaking with anger and bitterness at the mere sight of Ms Hanson. "She's made life hard for a lot of people around here. I'm a teacher and I get a lot of hell from the kids thanks to that lady," she said.

Ms Hanson believes that Aborigines should be treated no differently from other Australians, even though they have an infant mortality rate four times higher, a life expectancy up to 20 years shorter, and make up 30 per cent of the prison population but 2 per cent of the general population.

She argues that since the Wik court case established the Aborigines' native title to land that the government lets to farmers on pastoral leases, it is white Australians who are being discriminated against. "People out there are told this land belongs to Aboriginal people and there's a lot of racism. They are made to feel this isn't their country," she said.

It was a softening up for the next day, when she and the media raced each other in chartered aircraft to Longreach, more than 800km to the northwest.

Her public meetings have been very poorly attended so far, and the symbolic gathering outside the Stockmen's Hall Of Fame museum was no different.

What One Nation had advertised as a major policy initiative was nothing more than a rehash of her calls for the scrapping of the Aboriginal parliament, Atsic, the abolition of native title to land, and the ending of all benefits linked to race.

"The political bleeding-hearts and others who seek to line their pockets through greed will only destroy our nation and our people," she told a mere 30 gathered supporters. "They will never make us one by dividing the land in two."

Maria Peachy, a health worker, was one of the few Aborigines to show up, more in sorrow than in anger. "They misinterpret the Wik decision and other native title issues," she said. "I'd be happy to talk to her, but would she be willing to listen? Or does she prejudge everything?"

Ms Hanson faced a barrage of goading reporters' questions and the growing realisation that the Queensland National party's decision to put her last on its how-to-vote cards could spell the end of her parliamentary ambitions.

In the end she cracked under the pressure and screamed: "Get this clear, we are Australians and it makes no difference whether you are Aboriginal, whether you were born here, or whether you're a migrant, we are all Australians together and don't try and divide this nation."

Then she stormed off to the Jumbuck Motel, where 350 seats had been set out for a public meeting.

A spokesman said a $6 entrance fee was payable, to defer the cost of the aircraft charter. No more than 15 people paid to get in.

It was humiliating even by the madcap standards of One Nation. Margo Kingston of the Sydney Morning Herald, who has been watching Ms Hanson for a long time, said she had never seen anything like it. "There was a significant strengthening of the extremity of her remarks. They were deliberately provocative and inflammatory. But that's just a sign of the desperation of her campaigning."

Hanson: dwindling support

Santa Monica's kiss-and-tell routine

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

IN JUST over eight months, Monica Lewinsky has become the most famous woman in America. Video footage of her hugging Bill Clinton has been endlessly replayed in every corner of the globe, many times a day.

She has been photographed entering buildings, leaving buildings, at restaurants and theatres, and on one occasion posing on a California beach. She has been the subject of websites, rap lyrics, media and academic analysis, and of endless jokes and speculation.

Yet until the publication of the Starr report last week, there existed no public record of anything that Lewinsky has ever said, or anything that might yield an insight into the character and behaviour of this otherwise two-dimensional icon who is on the verge of destroying Bill Clinton's presidency.

The Starr report changes all that. To a remarkable degree, and as its thousands of meticulous footnotes attest, the report is based on Lewinsky's two long sessions of evidence to the Washington grand jury in August, as well as 15 days of private interviews with Kenneth Starr's lawyers, starting on July 27. Lewinsky is principal witness in the report, and until she signs a book deal and begins to do media interviews, the report is the prime witness on her.

The woman who emerges from a detailed reading of the report is both a protagonist and an initiator — deserving a very large share of the responsibility for starting the relationship, for being indiscreet about it and for pushing it forwards for so long.

Though the Starr report is uncharacteristically coy about this crucial detail, it is fairly clear that it was Lewinsky's decision to talk to Linda Tripp that has led to the crisis now engulfing Washington.

On a number of occasions the report records Clinton asking Lewinsky whether she had talked to anyone about their relationship. In April or May 1997, for example, a full 18 months after their affair began, "the president asked if she had told her mother about their intimate relationship". Lewinsky replied: "Of course not." As the report says, Lewinsky had been telling all to her mother from the beginning.

Between 1995 and 1998, Starr says, "Ms Lewinsky confided in 11 people about her relationship with the president". All 11 were questioned by Starr's team, most in front of the grand jury. If Clinton is a serial adulterer, Lewinsky is a serial blabbermouth.

No one reading the report can be in much doubt that Lewinsky fell in love with Clinton. But she is also a sexual initiator, and she reveals herself as massively self-centred. Though the report records frequent evidence of Clinton's sense of guilt about the relationship, including two occasions on which he broke off the liaison, there is no evidence that Lewinsky ever felt or expressed any moral doubts about what was happening.

Within a month of her arrival in the White House in July 1995, she began "intense flirting" with Clinton. She pushed herself into his presence and his line of sight.

On November 15, 1995, in what Starr describes as the first sexual encounter between Clinton and Lewinsky, she again made eye contact with the president and, then, within minutes, "she raised her jacket in the back and showed him the straps of her thong underwear, which extended above her pants."

The affair then began, with Clinton often expressing misgivings which he then disregarded and Lewinsky expressing none at all. A few months later, in February 1995, comes the first mention of the now celebrated cigar. Lewinsky took the initiative here as well.

Two weeks later, Clinton told her that he "no longer felt right about their intimate relationship and he had to put a stop to it".

But Lewinsky was not deterred. "There continued to be this sort of flirtation." Time and again she made sure that Clinton knew she was around and available. When she telephoned Clinton in September 1996, "she told the president that she wanted to have intercourse with him". Clinton replied that he "could not do so because of the possible consequences".

Of all Lewinsky's acts, perhaps the one she committed on August 18, 1996, was the most public, when she got into a cocktail party for major political donors. The Starr report says: "According to Ms Lewinsky, when the president reached past her at the rope line to shake hands with another guest, she reached out and touched his crotch in a 'playful' fashion."

Clinton told Starr on August 17: "I never should have started it, and I certainly shouldn't have started it back after I resolved not to in 1996." But restart it he did, allowing Lewinsky to take oral sex to completion for the first time on February 28 last year, when she was wearing the celebrated blue dress.

Two months later, Clinton again broke off the relationship, shortly after Lewinsky lied to him about not telling her mother. "The president explained they had to end their relationship. Earlier in his marriage, he told her, he had had hundreds of affairs; but since turning 40, he had made a concerted effort to be faithful."

Hearing of her dismissal from the White House, Lewinsky burst into tears and offered to stay without pay.

In November last year when she was denied entrance to the White House, Lewinsky, in her own words, went ballistic. When she next saw Clinton, she again offered him oral sex, which he refused.

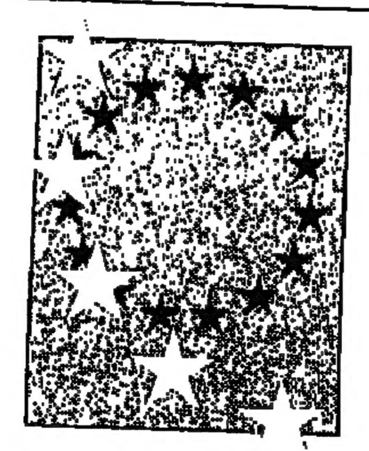
Poor Monica? Or, as the gift mug she gave Clinton from California said, Santa Monica? An office romance or the fruits of office? Presidential power or girl power?

The Clinton-Lewinsky relationship has a bit of them all. The Starr report is intended as an indictment of one person, Bill Clinton, but in truth it is an indictment of both the president and the woman who wanted it all — Monica Lewinsky.



Lewinsky: a protagonist and an initiator in relationship with Clinton

EU fiddles while east and west burn



Europe this week

Martin Walker

PERHAPS the most characteristic feature of the grand mandarins of Europe is the purity of their obsession. The great neighbour to the east may be melting down into a puddle of roubles and vodka, and the great partner to the west may be plunging into the hysterics of legalised regicide. But neither Boris Yeltsin's woes nor Bill Clinton's sexual peccadillos distracted Europe's great and good at the Palais d'Egmont in Brussels last week from their work of remodelling the staterooms on the Titanic.

They met to consider "the politico-institutional challenges and implications of Europe's enlargement". This is hardly a pressing issue. Malta may have revived its application to join the European Union after its change of government last week, but you would look long and hard around Brussels to find an informed person who would bet on any enlargement during the term of the current European Commission or of the next one, which will take us past 2005.

The Poles, Czechs, Hungarians and Estonians cling to the public assurances that target dates for accession are around 2003. The Slovenes, only 2 million people and already well integrated into the Austrian, German and Italian economies, may squeeze in around that time — if only to demonstrate Europe's good faith to the other candidate members. The others will have to wait until Europe has digested its single currency and reformed its infamous agricultural programme.

But the grand mandarins will not be denied. For Jacques Delors, former president of the Commission, "it is patently clear that already at a membership of 15 the system no longer gives satisfaction. The machine has seized up, despite the efforts of the Commission. The decision-making process suffers a double lack of efficiency and of transparency."

Delors sees three problems. First, 20 commissioners (one for each country and a second for each of the big ones) are too many, with enlargement threatening to expand it towards 30. Second, the Council of Ministers — where the member states meet and act — is too concerned with asserting its authority over the Commission and over the European Parliament, and no longer steers by a vision of Europe. Third, the Parliament is too weak and too fractious — Europe-wide political parties have yet to cohere, let alone campaign together on single policy platforms.

Most of the tiny proportion of Europeans who care about these things would agree, but they are not sure whether it matters. Europe's main policy course is set to the single currency, and to the harmonised economic policies and structures it implies, and then to a slow enlargement to the east over the next 10 years or so. By then we shall probably see a steady accumulation by habit of increasingly common foreign policies and a more effective and popular Parliament.

But the chaps who run things now are frustrated by the slow pace. The Commission president, Jacques Santer, has already suggested a new executive body of deputy prime ministers to act as an almost permanent Council of Ministers. And since he sees little prospect of any country giving up its own commissioner, he has also let his staff leak a scheme for a new layer of super-commissioners as a rational governing structure for Europe.

The new top level bureaucrats would be called vice-presidents, and four of them would join the Commission's president in the inner circle. The current draft plan suggests one for foreign affairs, one for financial matters, one for trade issues, and one for competition and the internal EU market. Each of the vice-presidents would then co-ordinate the work of the junior commissioners in his or her field on, for example, foreign aid, transport or consumer affairs.

NO SOONER had the plan leaked than the hats began to be thrown into the ring. First came the friends of Neil Kinnock, the former British Labour party leader and current transport commissioner, to say that he would be the perfect candidate to be the new super-commissioner in charge of EU foreign policy. Then the Germans, just slightly anticipating the outcome of their September 27 election, said Monika Wulf-Mathies would be just right as super-commissioner for competition and the internal market.

With their eye to the imminent next round of Gatt world trade negotiations, the French are dithering between going for the trade empire that Sir Leon Brittan carved out, or trying for the new job of super-commissioner for finance and monetary affairs.

But Santer's scheme is likely to run into five different layers of opposition. First, the smaller member states are unlikely to swallow any plan that threatens to give the bigger countries an automatic lock on the new top jobs. Second, the implicit downgrading of the other 16 commissioners virtually forces them to lobby against the scheme. Third, the candidate countries for EU membership have no voice as yet. But they instinctively suspect a scheme that looks like a ploy to keep them out of important jobs.

Fourth, the European Parliament will want to think long and hard about a reform that appears to shift so much power to a small group around the Commission president, which could downgrade their own power to summon and quiz individual commissioners. Finally, but probably most important, the member states will be asking themselves if this is aimed at shifting the balance of power between their own Council of Ministers and the Commission itself.

That has always been the concern of Britain, and of Sir John Kerr, current head of the Foreign Office, whose great skill is to present the traditional pragmatic British question — will it work?

We shall learn next month, when the heads of government meet for their special summit on how to bring Europe closer to its people, to what they think and what they want. However, they will probably let their staff draft some anodyne and uplifting words, and get on with the real business of getting to know the new German Chancellor, or telling Helmut Kohl how pleased they are to see him back. But do not underestimate the lobbying power of the mandarins, and the enduring grip their insistence on a grand Eurovision exerts on the senior officials of Europe's institutions.

Is Clinton facing a long goodbye?

The president must cope with a fallout as his allies feel betrayed. **Andrew Marr** reports from Washington

ON THE streets of Washington today there are plenty of people wondering whether Ken Starr's report matters a damn. America's middle classes are basking in the country's second-longest post-war boom, unemployment is low and there is a budgetary surplus for the first time in 30 years.

For millions of Americans, Bill Clinton has been the president of good times, and they are reluctant to see the back of him. His excellent poll ratings are now softening, and he has at time looked friendless on Capitol Hill, but few seem eager to see him go — just when the economic clouds are gathering. What does a little slavering in the Oval Office matter beside any of that?

On the left, though, Clinton's critics ask whether his future matters for a different reason. Since the capture of Congress by the Republicans in December 1994, his interventionist instincts have been largely blocked; his health reforms collapsed; he has made virtually no progress in tackling poverty or environmental problems.

As the columnist Alexander Cockburn put it brutally: "There was grave talk of the 'agony' of the past seven months, of the 'distraction' of the Lewinsky affair, whimperings that we return to 'the important issues'. What important issues? This country's political culture is dedicated to the refusal to discuss any such issues, or even to admit that they exist."

Yet, within a few days, all these objections to Congress getting the Lewinsky obsession, self-interested or high-minded, were unceremoniously elbowed aside. The months during which the White House had hoped that constant attacks on the motives of the unpopular Starr, the independent prosecutor, could somehow bury this were suddenly forgotten. The arrival of detailed charges of perjury, abuse of office and witness tampering were like a giant bucket of cold water. This was serious, after all.

In all great political scandals the public tends to latch on to colourful trivia and slide past the essence. Here too. All the carefully cross-referenced sex scenes, the touching of genitals, the not-quite-orgasms, the notorious cigar, are in the report for one reason: to show that the president lied, on oath. Constitutionally, legally, this is not a story about love and sex, but about trust and perjury.

Tell it to the Marines: it was the spilling out of the novelistic detail that enthralled Washington last weekend, transfixed the political classes and sent the White House into desperate defence-mode. Adopting their gravest, trembly voices, reporters for the television networks warned America they were about to repeat "unseemly allegations, which some viewers may not wish to hear". Congressmen lined up to express their personal sense of shock. There was a relentless, accelerating sense of drama about the president's ordeal that, to a British observer, echoes the sudden final paroxysms of Margaret Thatcher's premiership, as well as Richard Nixon's fall in 1974. Everyone, from the White House lawyers to Congressional soapbox moralists, was scrabbling to keep a finger on the downhill rush of events.

The Monica Lewinsky affair was a lucky break for Starr, who had originally been hired to investigate the Whitewater financial affair. For four years his large team of lawyers had been grubbing through the ropy business background of Clintonites in Arkansas, struggling with lurid rumours about Vince Foster's suicide and poring over numerous conspiracy and sex stories.

These investigations had fed, and been fed by, an acrid swirl of innuendo that has exhausted the Clinton administration since the mid-1990s. Yet, on the evidence presented by Starr last week, until Lewinsky came on the scene, there was nothing that warranted impeachment.

The Starr report reads, at times, like a badly written novel. It tells of a naive though not gutless girl who was seduced by Clinton, then fell in love with him.

It is easy to make too much of the "sordid" nature of their sex: there are few of us who, if our sex lives were recorded in detail and posted on the Internet, would meet our colleagues' gaze the next morning. Eventually, and inevitably, Lewinsky blabbed to an embittered ex-White House employee, Linda Tripp, who taped some 18 hours of conversation with her. Tripp, the unforgiving Fury, then went to Starr, Clinton's smirkingly relentless Nemesis.

No wonder Clinton panicked. According to Starr, he misused his office and employees, tried to persuade Lewinsky to perjure herself, and attempted to get her a job. As with Watergate, though history was repeating itself as farce, the original offence mattered less than the attempt to hide it.

Clinton had been pursued by sex allegations ever since his first presidential campaign. He had come close to humiliation during the Paula Jones case. This was thrown out, but not before he faced a serious threat of having to expose himself before witnesses looking for "distinguishing marks" on his penis.

This time it was worse. There were tapes, accumulated details and eventually depositions. "Is it possible that Monica was lying?" asked one anguished Clinton supporter last week, echoing the hopes of many. The short answer is No. And if she wasn't lying, he was. He lied on oath to Jones's lawyers; he lied to his Cabinet. And, of course, he lied to the American people — on national television.

UNFREE WILLY

The ribald revelations in Starr's report make any attempt to hide behind abstruse definitions of "sexual" look absurd. Yet, looking directly into the camera, and deploying his most quaveringly sincere expression, Clinton told America: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time, never." And as late as Friday last week, White House lawyers were still trying to deploy the same bizarre argument: if someone is having oral sex with you, you aren't having sexual relations with them.

Some of Clinton's closest advisers — including his wife Hillary — put everything down to a vast right-wing conspiracy. A conspiracy there may have been. But there was a cigar and a semen-stained dress too.

BY LAST month, with the relentless work of the Starr team close to conclusion, Clinton finally let some of the truth spill out. His earlier answers had been "legally accurate", he insisted — though it would take great charity to see it that way — but he had not volunteered information: "Indeed I did have a relationship with Ms Lewinsky that was not appropriate. In fact, it was wrong . . . I misled people, including even my wife."

For many, Clinton's apology seemed forced and not fully sincere. But now came repeated apologies — and, like the earlier lies, each more vehement than its predecessor. Then came "Clinton's Apology — the World Tour" to Russia and Ireland. It cut little mustard with his party back home.

The most damaging attack, which set the tone for much of what followed, came from Joseph Lieberman, a close ally of Clinton for many years and a man of great authority in the party. The president's behaviour had been "immoral . . . disgraceful", said Lieberman, and compromised his moral authority. The White House's instant reaction was humble: "It is always hardest to hear criticism from your friends," a spokesman said. In Ireland, Clinton responded with a blank: "Basically, I agree with what he said."

Something, though, seemed to have turned inside the soul of the Democrats. They were not going to be so quickly assuaged. Talk of impeachment was suddenly everywhere in Washington.

When he arrived home from Ireland, Clinton endured the humiliation of being shunned by Democrats campaigning for state governorships. Suddenly, it was as though the man whose political lustre everyone had wanted to share was dangerous to be near.

Then Starr played his final and deadliest trick. Washington was still sleepily, slowly, returning to work after the summer break. Congressmen were beginning to discuss what to do when the unattractive fruit of a four-year investigation arrived. Then, out of the blue, Starr's deputy called the sergeant-at-arms in the House. The report, he said, would be with them in 15 minutes. Starr's staff handed over the vast report and 36 boxes of evidence, with their tales of semen stains and arm-twisting.

Then it was up to Congress to decide what to do. Clinton's legal team had expected two weeks to prepare their defence and were still hoping to see the report before it was published.

Suddenly impeachment was not a rightwing fantasy but an imminent possibility. Newt Gingrich, the Speaker, not known for his generosity of spirit, urged Congress to show restraint.

The White House, struggling to respond to a report Clinton still hadn't seen, insisted that it was a one-sided account which included no grounds for impeachment.

As Congress went through the sombre process of preparing for a possible impeachment, Clinton had decided on an audacious and unexpected response.

At a long-scheduled White House prayer meeting last Friday, televised live, he threw himself on the mercy of his detractors. "I may not be quite easy with my words today," he began. This Liberace of impromptu eloquence had painstakingly written down his statement after a long, late night "thinking and praying".

Then Clinton said sorry to his family, his Cabinet and to Lewinsky and her family. "I have repented . . . [I have] what my Bible calls a 'broken spirit', an understanding that I must have God's help to be the person that I want to be."

If he intended to draw the strongest distinction possible with Nixon — who resigned in a mood of angry impenitence — then Clinton certainly succeeded. His lip-chewing repentance was brilliant and had an immediate effect on some critics.

When the report finally broke, the first reaction from Congressmen and the public was hostile — more so, it seems, than the White House was prepared for.

Through last Friday, Starr's report was being goggled at on the Internet and absorbed by the public. Outside the hub of Washington I sat with some traditional party loyalists — Peace Corps people, lifelong Democrats and serious Christians — who were simply revolted. Would this, they wondered, lead now to a return of the radical right, another period of Reagnomics and Gingrich unbound? No one should underestimate the sense of betrayal that some of the Clintons' nearest natural supporters now feel.

The Clintons are fighters and come-back artists, surrounded by some of the sharpest political minds and best legal advice in the Western world. Last weekend, another enormous rebuttal was being launched. The smiles were brave. But it will never be a glad, confident morning again, not for the Clintons.

In the end there is a simple, flint-hard question. Can a democracy based so firmly on the rule of law tolerate a perjurer and liar as President? I think the answer is No.

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Washington Post, page 15

Clicking frenzy on the Net

THE ONLINE posting of the independent counsel's report was widely seen as a defining moment for the Internet, *writes Greg Miller*.

It had the media spotlight to itself for a few hours on Friday last week as the US Congress unleashed the lurid details of Kenneth Starr's report on the only medium equipped to convey the document so instantly and exhaustively.

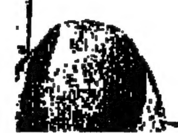
The posting on the House of Representatives Website created a clicking frenzy as millions sought a look at the fruits of Starr's investigation.

But cyberspace's coming of age was uncomfortable for many prominent exponents, who regretted that the Net's display of power was centred on such an unseemly episode. "This is a defining moment for the Internet, but not necessarily a proud one," said Esther Dyson, a venture capitalist and Internet guru.

There were questions about the ability of the sometimes fragile network to handle the volume of traffic. Numerous breakdowns, delays and other problems were reported.

But many believe the legacy of the event will be questions about whether direct access to information is always a good thing. Lycos, a search engine, posted a warning that "Some of the contents of this report may be offensive." — *Los Angeles Times*





The Week in Britain James Lewis

TUC facing a struggle as Labour's love seems lost

WHEN LABOUR was last in office, the demands of the Trades Union Congress in September would largely determine the decisions taken by the party conference a few weeks later and would loom large over governmental decision-making in the months and years ahead. Not any more.

Union members affiliated to the TUC, who numbered nearly 12 million before Mrs Thatcher came to power in 1979, have now dwindled to around 7 million. Their representatives at the annual gathering of the congress in Blackpool this week were painfully aware of their loss of political clout but, for the first time since the general election, were showing signs of rebellion.

TUC president John Edmonds attacked the Government's maintenance of elements of Thatcherism, specifically with regard to pay. But he reserved his most vociferous remarks for company directors who pay themselves huge salaries while holding down their workers' wages, describing them as "greedy bastards" and "bloated rodents" who have fostered a "politics of the pig trough".

A split also emerged over the merits or otherwise of European Monetary Union, while the GMB general workers' union, one of the biggest and most eclectic, withdrew its support for one of the key policies of the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to encourage private sector finance for public projects such as hospital-building. If the GMB could collect sufficient support, it could deliver a surprise setback to the Government.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has certainly done little to woo the unions. He paid a quick visit to Blackpool, but only for a dinner. The Trade and Industry Secretary, Peter Mandelson, attended on Tuesday with the bleak message that global financial turmoil, flat productivity and rising earnings were bound to build pressure on jobs, but that there was nothing the Government could do to change the current situation.

TOMMY GRAHAM, an archetypal backstreet politician from Glasgow, became the first MP in eight years to be expelled from his party when Labour acted to remove the taint of sleaze that has dogged it in Scotland and helped the Scottish National Party to catch up with it in the polls.

The MP for Paisley South, Gordon McMaster, who took his own life last year, left a note accusing Mr Graham of running a smear campaign against him. A party inquiry cleared him of contributing to the suicide, but a wider investigation was launched.

This has found Mr Graham guilty of, among other things, offering compromising pictures of a senior union official in return for personal details concerning an election opponent.

This was part of Mr Graham's campaign to destabilise neighbouring MPs in order to find other constituencies for himself and his cronies when a boundary review threatened to turn his Renfrewshire West seat into a marginal. The SNP, which needs a 10 per cent swing to win it, said it was certain of doing so at the next election.

PEOPLE LIVING in Scotland are much more likely to take their own lives than people in other parts of Britain. According to the Office of National Statistics, male suicides in Scotland in 1994-96 were more than 50 per cent higher than in Britain as a whole; female suicides were 70 per cent higher.

In England, the highest suicide rates were to be found in the Northwest region, and Manchester was the worst local authority area, with 415 suicides between 1991 and 1996. One study estimated that one in 10 Manchester men was clinically depressed.

The city also has the highest number of registered disabled and people permanently sick or jobless, and the lowest number of cars per capita in the country.

A WOMAN who lied to doctors about her age to become Britain's oldest test-tube mother three years ago is to have a second child, just two months before her 56th birthday.

Pauline Lyon, from Cambridgeshire, who gave birth to her daughter, Lauren, a month before her 52nd birthday, is due to repeat the experience in March. It will make her the second oldest woman to be given successful test-tube treatment in Britain after Elizabeth Buttle, who had a son in January at the age of 60.

THE ROYAL Opera House, Covent Garden, stunned the arts world by announcing that there will be no opera performances next year. The move is part of a radical rescue plan to put the house in order by the time redevelopment work is completed in 15 months' time.

The number of opera and ballet performances in the first full season in the new £214 million building, will also be reduced by a third, to 220, to try to reduce a deficit that will otherwise top £25 million by 2000. The news provoked outrage among the 500 staff, who were told that they must accept renegotiated working conditions and a reduced workforce by October 26, or face mass redundancy.



Scary ties the knot discreetly

Jamie Wilson

WOULD she or wouldn't she? That was the question on everybody's lips outside the picturesque church in Little Marlow, Buckinghamshire, last Sunday. Not that there was any doubt that Scary Spice, aka Melanie Brown, would be marrying her Dutch dancer Jimmy Gulzar. But would Scary invite Ginger ex-Spice (aka Geri Halliwell)?

Apparently not. Apart from the three other members of the group and Posh Spice Victoria Adams's fiancé David Beckham, it was a celebrity-free zone.

The wrought iron gates to Ms Brown's £2.5 million mansion had been hung with white sheets since the previous Friday night. Covered walkways, constructed especially for the occasion, linked the church to the mansion to keep the prying eyes of the press away because OK! magazine had payed a reputed £350,000 for exclusive rights.

The Reverend Sue Irwin conducted the ceremony, and at about 4pm Scary finally got what she really really wanted.

PHOTOGRAPH: AUSTIN HAR[illegible]

Breath detector 'can diagnose disease'

Sarah Boseley

A REVOLUTIONARY device that will tell a doctor what is wrong and which drugs to prescribe from the smell of the patient's breath is being developed by a team of top scientists at one of Britain's leading universities.

Development of the diagnostic breathalyser is being compared to the invention of the thermometer. Within a few years, not just every general practitioner but every home could have one.

So sure are the scientists from Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, London, of the importance of their project that last week they took the unprecedented step of launching an all-British company called BodiTech to develop the hand-held machine which they believe will save the world billions of dollars and safeguard the future of antibiotics.

Peter Openshaw, a specialist in respiratory medicine, Honorary Consultant Physician at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, and one of the Imperial team, said the device would tell the doctor whether antibiotics would help or not. "It will not only tell the difference between a virus [on which antibiotics have no effect] and bacteria, but it will tell the doctor which type of bacteria is present and which antibiotic will be of most help," he said.

Over-prescribing would stop as patients would be able to read their own breathalyser and recognise that antibiotics were not required.

Asthma affects up to 20 per cent of children and about 5 per cent of adults. The infection it causes in the lungs gives off vapours which the breathalyser could detect and measure. "It will tell you whether the inhaled steroid level should be adjusted," said Professor Openshaw.

The future looks even more extraordinary, if the scientists are right. There is a recognised smell associated with liver failure which even has a name — *foetor hepaticus*. Patients with renal failure have a musty smell. Diabetics with high sugar levels might be able to blow into the box three times a day instead of sampling their blood.

As with most good ideas, the concept is old. In medieval times odours were used in diagnosis. But it took the inspiration of the man they now call "the father of the electronic nose" to turn ancient wisdom into a potential breakthrough.

Biochemist George Dodds is a world authority on odour and olfaction science. In 1970, he published the first description of a sensor system that could lead to the manufacture of an artificial nose. He is now research and development director of Kiotech International plc, the British company that will hold 51 per cent of BodiTech to Imperial's 49 per cent.

Imperial is putting in the expertise of top scientists in seven or more different fields, from electrical engineering to biochemistry to medicine. The first clinical trials are expected within two years and the first devices ready within five years. The market is calculated to be potentially worth £13 billion worldwide, just within medical circles.

Retired teachers hired to fill recruitment gaps

John Carvel

THOUSANDS of schools have started term without a permanent head because of a recruitment crisis, the National Association of Head Teachers warned last week.

David Hart, its general secretary, said that in parts of London and the Southeast, schools were having to hire locums, usually retired teachers provided by agencies.

"Acting heads or locum heads are no doubt doing their best, but they are no substitute for a permanent head," he said.

He said recruitment was in its worst state yet. Only 5 per cent of London primaries advertising for a head over the past year received more than 10 applications — the "absolute rock bottom figure" for governors wanting an adequate choice for shortlisting.

Nearly two-thirds of these schools were obliged to re-advertise, and 43 per cent failed to appoint. "Agencies providing schools with temporary staff are no longer limiting themselves to teachers. They are providing locum heads to work for a term or two — and they are telling us they cannot find enough of them to meet demand," Mr Hart said.

Some locums had retired early, taking enhanced pensions on the grounds that they were "burned out". Their re-employment outside the normal terms for pay and conditions was legally dubious.

One reason for the shortage of permanent heads was low pay. The head of a small primary on a maximum of £29,355 a year was earning 22 per cent less than the going rate for jobs of similar responsibility, said Mr Hart.

"Since headship . . . is going to determine whether the Government hits or misses its targets come the next election, I think the Government will be well advised to pay particular attention to the problem. I do not think the Government frankly has got enough time left," Mr Hart said.

No handshake, but they made history

John Mullin

IN A drinks room decorated in tasteful pink and cream, the two men were alone at last. Gone were colleagues, advisers and note-takers. They spoke for 35 minutes, truly momentous times.

One, a former academic lawyer; the other, a one-time barman. Today they lead Ulster unionism and Irish republicanism, and this was the first time those incumbents had met in three-quarters of a century.

David Trimble, Northern Ireland's First Minister, and Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein president, still have to shake hands, but their first face-to-face meeting last week was civil enough. They even took the opportunity to try out each other's first names.

Nothing much was decided. The decommissioning of IRA weapons is still the stumbling block as Sinn Fein pushes to join the power-sharing executive, and those issues dominated the conversation. But that the meeting took place at all was progress.

Both men searched for positive descriptions of their encounter. They agreed it was cordial, constructive and business-like.

Mr Adams praised Mr Trimble, the first Ulster Unionist leader to meet a Sinn Fein leader since 1922. He believed no other member of Mr Trimble's party could have brought it so far so quickly.

Mr Adams said: "He is a man I can do business with; he is a man I have to do business with; and he is a man who I will do business with. This is more important than the personalities involved. This is not about me or David Trimble. It's about our children and it's about our future."

Mr Trimble was waving an olive branch too, and he had left off his favoured barbed wire wrapping for it. His words on decommissioning were measured, clothed in the language of reason. He avoided using the term "terrorists". He made it clear he was not seeking their "surrender" or "humiliation".

Mr Trimble said: "There is a realisation among all those people who have been involved in paramilitary activity that it is all going to end. It's all ending now and we must therefore see in a reasonably short time the inevitable dealing with the consequences."

He surprised nationalist opinion. He announced that the first meeting of the North-South ministerial council, long-resisted by unionists, would take place within the next month or so.

The Trimble-Adams meeting followed a more formal summit, with civil servants and secretaries that lasted 40 minutes. Then Mr Trimble and Mr Adams stepped together into an ante-room. Although they hardly left as bosom chums, both were clearly pleased.

In the choreographed push for progress, no one was much surprised that Ronnie Flanagan, Royal Ulster Constabulary's chief constable, took the opportunity to announce that he was ending all weekend security patrols in Belfast. He confirmed that troop levels in Northern Ireland — currently 16,000 — could soon be cut, paving the way for IRA decommissioning.

It was Mr Adams who turned to his dictionary of quotations to describe the meeting. It was, he said, the first step of the journey he hoped would lead to nationalists, unionists, republicans and loyalists peacefully co-existing.

He quoted from Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address in 1865 as the American civil war ended. "With malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right . . . let us strive on to finish the work we are in: to bind up the nation's wounds . . . to do all which may achieve . . . a just and a lasting peace."

On Monday Northern Ireland's new assembly met for the first time. It was, most pundits agreed, fearsomely dull. That, though, is a measure of how much progress has been made, and why the latest attempt at devolving power after 26 years of direct rule is destined to work.

Mr Trimble later thought it had all gone well. He believed the meeting to be good-humoured. "Even those who in the referendum campaign were campaigning on a No ticket were talking about the nuts and bolts. It seems to me they have finally accepted the referendum outcome and working within the context of the agreement."

But Ian Paisley's plan to accept his party's two executive places and then refuse to sit with Sinn Fein will cause Mr Trimble difficulties. It could force his unionist backers to vote the Democratic Unionist party out of government, while allowing Sinn Fein to stay.

● Six terrorists jailed for a total of 87 years walked free from the Maze in Northern Ireland last week, the first paramilitary prisoners to benefit from the controversial accelerated release programme that forms a key part of the Good Friday agreement. More than 200 paramilitary prisoners, including loyalist mass murderer Michael Stone and the IRA Brighton bomber Patrick Magee, are expected to be freed within the next two months.

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams, left, and Ulster First Minister David Trimble PHOTO: JUSTIN KERNOGHAN

End declared to 'jail works'

Alan Travis

UP TO 20,000 prison inmates should be released and dealt with more effectively by being placed on community punishments, an all-party group of MPs said last week.

The Commons home affairs select committee report warns that the huge rise in the prison population over the past five years to more than 66,000 "is unsustainable".

Chris Mullin, the committee chairman, said that the report had been unanimous: "I would like to think that this report marks the formal end of the 'prison works' philosophy."

The MPs endorsed estimates by the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham, that one in four inmates, the less serious criminals, need not be in prison. They include 70 per cent of women inmates, and many of those jailed for drug misuse for whom treatment outside prison is far more effective.

World Service to reflect new Britain

THE BBC World Service is to be rebranded to give it a more modern flavour — sweeping away the "bowler hat and umbrella" image in favour of a friendlier local radio style, *writes Amelia Gentleman*.

Concerned that its distant and excessively serious tone was alienating its audience around the world, the World Service has decided to lighten up in order to win back listeners. The fierce battle with television, which has recently intensified in some parts of the world, meant that the service's global audience dropped by about 2 million listeners from 1996 to 1997.

The service aims to project a more youthful image that will reflect Britain's "outward looking, multicultural society". These changes reflect a similar Foreign Office strategy aimed at improving perceptions of Britain overseas and promoting the country's "modern identity" abroad. They come in the wake of the Government's decision to increase its grant to the World Service by £44.2 million over three years, taking the taxpayers' contribution to £176 million in 1999.

An extensive programme of listener research convinced the service that its style needed to change. Alan Booth, controller of marketing, explained: "People want reliable news, analysis and information they can trust, but they don't like being lectured, they want a friendlier tone.

"We have been seen as reliable but dull, so we are trying to be more friendly, in a relaxed, local radio style. The news needs to lighten up by having shorter items and more lifestyle pieces."

Research with focus groups suggested that listeners in Russia regarded the World Service as a "thing of the past", while some Americans saw it as a "colonial irrelevance".

Caroline Thomson, deputy managing director of the service, which began broadcasting as the Empire Service some 50 years ago, said: "Our research shows a close association between people's perception of BBC World Service and people's perception of Britain. Our aim is to build an image which, while inspiring trust, also reflects a contemporary Britain as an outward-looking, multicultural society which values tolerance and is a centre for creativity and innovation."

In view of the recent unpopularity of the sudden alterations to the Radio 4 schedule, changes will be brought in slowly. The BBC said: "Research is under way to find out what audiences are saying, and what they say will influence our decisions."

John Beyer, director of the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, was not convinced that the changes would result in an improvement. "This notion of updating can often mean impoverishing the service. People who listen to the World Service are very sensitive to change. They rely on it for the serious news it provides, and if that is diluted in any way then loyal listeners will probably be very distressed."

But a Foreign Office spokesman was more positive. "This fits in with what we are doing ourselves, trying to improve the way Britain is perceived overseas. The impression that many people have is still a bit out of date. We don't want to discard our heritage, but we shouldn't ignore the present."

In Brief

VIAGRA, the anti-impotence pill, was banned on the National Health Service by the Government just days before it is due to be licensed in Britain while Whitehall decides what to do about the potentially huge bill for prescribing the drug.

POLICE arrested a 31-year-old man in connection with the murders of three friends at their flat in Slough, Berkshire. The suspect, named as Alan Hobbs, was detained after an undercover police operation following a tip-off.

DAVID SHAYLER, the renegade MI5 officer who has made allegations of mismanagement and incompetence in the agency, and faces extradition from France, has put an open letter on the Internet to his former boss, calling for reform of the Official Secrets Act.

THE first elections for London's mayor and council are to be put back, from November 1999 to May 2000, because of the anticipated battle to get legislation through the House of Lords following Tony Blair's decision to abolish hereditary peerages next year.

CHRIS PATTEN, the last governor of Hong Kong, ruled himself out as a future leader of the Conservative party, declaring that he would visit Downing Street "only as a guest of the prime minister, William Hague".

NICK LEESON, the trader who broke Britain's oldest merchant bank, Barings, will not be released from jail early despite suffering from cancer of the colon, the Singaporean authorities ruled.

AN £800 million programme to tackle problems from bad housing and health to education and crime was unveiled by the Prime Minister to help the poorest communities.

INTERNATIONAL computer networks must not be used to peddle racist, threatening and abusive material, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said. The National Criminal Intelligence Service had a "key role" in bringing Internet racists to justice.

ITALIAN authorities have jailed a British woman for 11 years, claiming she was the brains behind a plan to smuggle 150 kilograms of cocaine into the country. Ruth Sandberg, aged 36, maintains she has been framed by the jealous ex-wife of her former lover, a Neapolitan petty criminal.

SIR RALPH FREEMAN, the man behind engineering projects such as the Forth Road Bridge and the Humber Bridge, until this year the world's longest, has died aged 87.

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Minorities 'pessimistic over race relations'

Lucy Ward

BLACK and Asian young people are deeply pessimistic about worsening race relations in Britain, according to a report which accuses the Government of offering only a "lukewarm" response to the concerns of ethnic minorities.

The study, published last week, uncovers a deep sense of alienation from the political process among many people from ethnic minorities. Of those eligible to vote, more than a quarter are not registered, rising to 55 per cent among blacks in one of the constituencies surveyed.

The report, by Muhammed Anwar of Warwick university's centre for research in ethnic relations, confirms overwhelming support for Labour among ethnic minority voters, but warns that statements made by the party before the general election "have not been effectively translated into action".

The warning was echoed by the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, Sir Herman Ouseley, who writes in the latest issue of New Statesman that ethnic minority votes cannot be taken for granted by Labour. He adds: "Black and Asian voters may not flock to other parties but there is evidence that younger people (particularly Afro-Caribbeans) are opting out of democratic politics."

Professor Anwar's study, commissioned by Operation Black Vote (OBV) — a campaign group set up to increase black participation in politics — finds that black and Asian people are significantly more gloomy over race relations than their white counterparts.

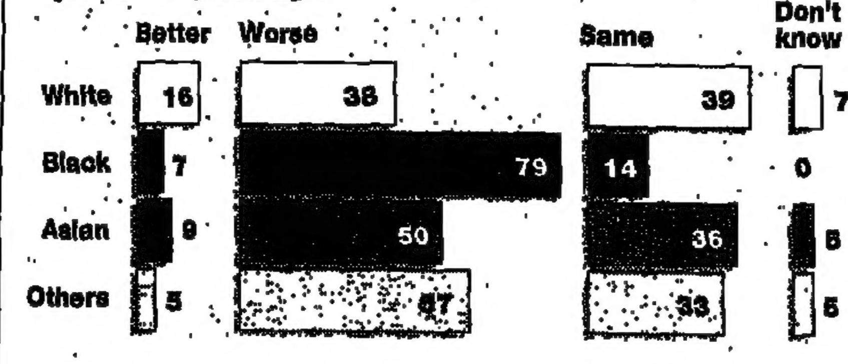
A survey in five inner city local authorities found that white voters were at least three times more likely to feel relations had improved locally and nationally. A similar pattern of ethnic difference emerged over expectations for race relations over the next five years, with black people aged 18 to 24 proving particularly pessimistic. Four out of five believe relations will worsen.

Voters of all ethnic backgrounds believed the major parties were failing to integrate ethnic minorities into the political process. OBV called for more ethnic minority candidates, and more effort to encourage people to register to vote.

Co-ordinator Simon Woolley said: "Issues like the murder of Stephen Lawrence have confirmed some people's worst fears about the police and the political system. It took four years for the Government to take the death of this black teenager seriously."

Home Office Minister Mike O'Brien told BBC Radio's Today programme that the Government accepted there was no room for complacency. In the past year it had introduced tough new laws to tackle racial violence and harassment.

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Council faces £750,000 race payout

Helen Carter

THE biggest race discrimination payout to date, expected to be up to £750,000, will be made next month by a council that claims to lead the field in equal opportunities to a senior official who suffered "four years of living hell" at the hands of a colleague.

Sam Yeboah, a former head of personnel at Hackney council in east London, had been subjected to a campaign of false allegations by housing director Bernard Crofton, who had "a fixed mental impression that Africans, particularly West Africans, have a propensity to commit fraud", the tribunal found.

After a 104-day hearing, an industrial tribunal last week found Mr Crofton — who had been praised for rooting out corruption in the borough — guilty of five race discrimination charges.

Mr Yeboah, aged 52, of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, is waiting to hear how much compensation he will receive. The payout, which will be decided next month, will take into account his £65,000-a-year salary and the fact that he has been unable to work for two years.

The tribunal's ruling said: "A striking feature of this case has been the number and persistence of false allegations which Mr Crofton has made against Mr Yeboah."

Mr Yeboah, who has been unemployed since he left his job at the start of 1996, said: "This is the first time I have been publicly vindicated, but it does not make up for what I have been through. I have been through a living hell for the last four years."

Hackney council has had 99 claims of race discrimination filed against it in the past five years. Last year it was forced to pay £172,000 to a valuer of Chinese origin who had been bullied and humiliated by managers because his face did not fit.

Mr Crofton now works as a consultant for a housing association. He was unavailable for comment.

Computer collapse wipes out records

David Brindle

THE main computer register of the national insurance records of everybody in Britain has collapsed, throwing the social security system into turmoil and forcing benefit offices to make payments to claimants without knowing if they are eligible.

The Department of Social Security (DSS) has been trying to play down the crisis, believed already to have hit at least 80,000 claims for jobseekers' allowances and incapacity benefits, but last week admitted it was in difficulties.

The department has set up a telephone helpline for people hitting problems with benefit claims or with new state pensions, payment of which is being delayed in a growing number of cases.

The collapse of the national insurance register, known as NIRS, has occurred during the transfer of its records to a new computer under the biggest and most complex information technology project in Europe. The £170 million project is being spearheaded under the private finance initiative by contractor Andersen Consulting.

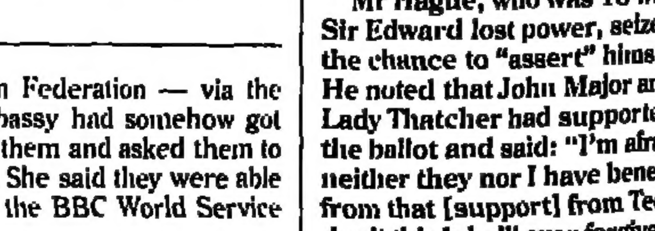
The ill-fated project has already been severely delayed, with Andersen's contract having been renegotiated in 1996 and the company having paid compensation for its failure to deliver on time.

Although the DSS has been reluctant to admit NIRS has ceased functioning, it has issued a circular to local authorities — responsible for payment of housing and council tax benefits — on what to do in light of the system's "closure".

One reason for the department's coyness is likely to be fear of encouraging fraud. Local authorities are being told to make benefit payments on account, assessing the claimant's eligibility as best they can, and to make corrections later when the computer comes back on line.

Benefit officials are braced for the NIRS system to be out of action until at least the end of October, although Andersen's is understood to think it is close to solving the problem.

All interim and "on-account" payments will be reviewed once the computer becomes operational, with the DSS expected to underwrite losses incurred through overpayment and fraud. No claimant is expected to be asked to repay money.



Camilla Carr and Jon James as seen on the video

Hostages seen alive on video

THE first concrete evidence that the two British hostages held captive in Chechenia are alive and well emerged last week when a short video of the couple filmed at the end of last month was made public, *writes Amelia Gentleman.*

The families of Camilla Carr and Jon James, who were abducted by Chechen gunmen in July last year, said they were encouraged by the two-minute film, which shows the couple in reasonable health. But their deteriorating physical and mental condition is painfully evident, highlighting for relatives the urgency of their campaign to have them released.

Dated August 24, it shows Ms Carr, aged 40, and Mr James, aged 38, huddled together, looking pale, drawn, vulnerable and under pressure. Ms Carr revealed that letters sent to Chechenia — a republic in the Russian Federation — via the British embassy had somehow got through to them and asked them to send more. She said they were able to listen to the BBC World Service on radio.

Only a few other clues emerged as to the conditions they are living in. Mr James apologised for his quiet voice, explaining: "It is the first time I have used my voice at this volume." He added: "I don't know how long I can stay sane." Ms Carr added firmly: "But we will."

The couple were shown sitting by a green Chechen hat, possibly an indication that they remain in the republic. British officials do not know where they are being held or what their captors want.

The couple were kidnapped from their home in the capital, Grozny, where they had been working for three months as volunteers for a Quaker-run organisation set up to help children traumatised by the recent civil war. Several attempts to rescue them have failed, and a reward of £100,000 offered by the Chechen president, Aslan Maskhadov, has had no success.

Fears for their safety were heightened last month when two freed Hungarian hostages told how they had been "shackled like animals" in Chechenia.

Hague plays down 'sad' Heath jibe

Michael White

WILLIAM Hague took the Conservatives' 20-year civil war over Europe to a new generation when, at a Young Tories conference last weekend, he slapped down Sir Edward Heath for daring to question his strategy for leading the party.

After Sir Edward, now aged 82, said that the Conservatives would not attract him if he were a young man today, Mr Hague told activists in Nottingham that the man whose four-year premiership from 1970-74 made him a hate figure on the Thatcherite right, was a "sad" person never reconciled to losing the leadership.

Sir Edward's offence was to give an interview to the Sunday Times, which is serialising his long-awaited memoirs. Last Sunday's extract was predictably severe on Margaret Thatcher's policies. But his jibes, such as her creed of monetarism being "perhaps the most deceptively simplistic of all economic theories", have been heard before.

Instead, the newspaper highlighted an interview with him, before he left on a visit to China. He criticises Tony Blair — "obviously far more to the right than I am" — but also admits he wouldn't be a Young Tory today. "I know a lot of people it doesn't attract," he said.

With Mr Hague facing a tricky party conference in two weeks' time — barely more popular in the polls than he was a year ago — this was unhelpful. But Sir Edward's distaste for the Hague right-leaning leadership had evidently been reignited by the decision to stage a snap ballot on the leader's 10-year moratorium on Britain joining the single European currency.

Mr Hague, who was 13 when Sir Edward lost power, seized the chance to "assert" himself. He noted that John Major and Lady Thatcher had supported the ballot and said: "I'm afraid neither they nor I have benefited from that [support] from Ted. I don't think he'll ever forgive us for leading the party after him."

The Heath-Thatcher feud, dating almost from when she overthrew him in 1975, was full of misunderstandings and bitterness, the Heath memoirs make clear. He hated the way she attacked his policies as "U-turns", after being in his Cabinet, and how she never consulted him when she was prime minister. Mr Hague looks set to repeat her errors.

Sir Edward, in turn, criticised the Hague reforms for which he blamed the management consultancy culture of McKinseys — for which Mr Hague and his organisational guru, Archie Norman MP, once worked. "Politics isn't the same as a business organisation with people at the top telling everyone what to do," he explained to the Sunday Times.

Mr Hague said: "Ted Heath has never forgiven me for being party leader. I have a lot of respect for him, but we've got to move on to future generations."

GUARDIAN WEEKLY September 20 1998

Blair slips down in popularity stakes

Alan Travis

TONY BLAIR'S honeymoon with the voters is over and a disaffected electorate is beginning to view him as just another politician, according to the latest Guardian/ICM opinion poll published last week.

The extraordinary bubble of popularity surrounding the Prime Minister, which broke records in the aftermath of Labour's landslide victory, has now burst.

The poll shows that his personal ratings, particularly those for honesty and empathy with the voters, have plummeted to levels more in keeping with ratings for past prime ministers.

The survey shows that Mr Blair's personality rating has tumbled from an unrealistic 80 per cent to 60 per cent, still a high figure. But his advisers will be more concerned by a knock to his reputation for personal honesty, empathy and toughness.

His ratings — particularly when respondents were asked whether he is "more honest than most politicians" — have come down to levels similar to those enjoyed by John Major, although Mr Blair is seen as being more in touch with voters' concerns.

Mr Blair can also take some comfort from the fact that the 50 per cent of voters who see him as "having more style than substance" has not risen markedly during the past 12 months.

But if the poll shows Mr Blair coming down to earth, it also shows that the Conservative leader, William Hague, has yet to get off the ground. It is clear from the detailed results that falling support for the Prime Minister is the result of disaffection with politicians rather than voters switching allegiance.

Mr Hague appears to have made little progress in the last year and barely registered with those questioned. The only Hague attribute mentioned repeatedly (by 43 per cent of those questioned) is arrogance. This finding is underlined by the fact that only one in 10 voters believe the Conservatives will be returned to power at the next election. Most believe they will be out of power for at least another nine years.

The annual Guardian/ICM "state of the nation" survey shows that Labour's hard-won reputation for being the best party to manage the economy has also taken a sharp knock.

Only 35 per cent of voters agree, a fall of 15 points. Britain is also seen by increasing numbers as becoming a less equal society.

But despite growing talk of recession, redundancies and volatile stock markets, most voters say their own family finances have improved or stayed the same. The proportion of voters whose family finances have worsened remains roughly the same, at 28 per cent.

The poll also shows that Labour has arrested the decline in confidence in the National Health Service and schools.

Labour voters in particular have become convinced that the school system is improving (up 14 points to 42 per cent), and 21 per cent believe it is getting worse (down seven points). On the NHS, Labour voters are only slightly more optimistic.

The survey, which asks voters to give their verdict on the performance of the party leaders and the Government on 12 key indicators, also shows a narrowing split in public opinion on Europe, and rising concern about food safety.

Monthly polls show Labour enjoying a 19-point lead over the Tories. The September figures are: Labour 48 per cent (up one); Conservatives 29 per cent (down two); Lib Dems 17 per cent (no change) and others 6 per cent (up two).

ICM interviewed a random sample of 1,178 adults aged over 18 by telephone between September 4 and 6, 1998. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults.

Tony and Cherie Blair attending the funeral service in London last week for Lord Rothermere PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNER

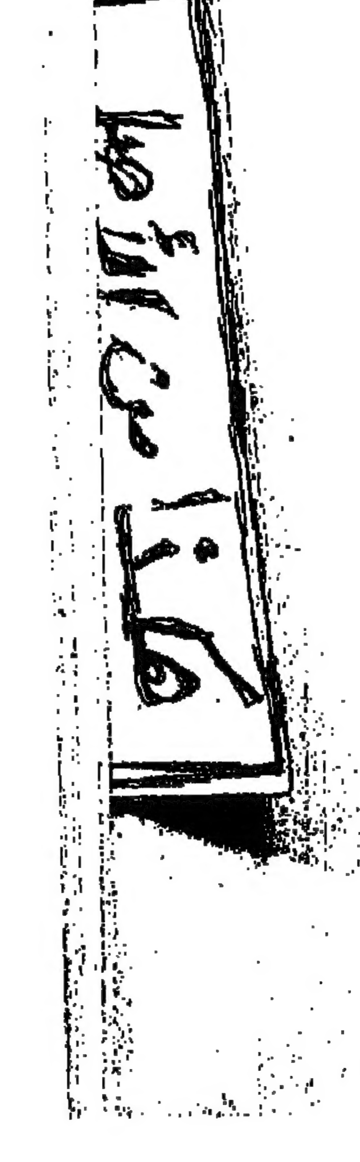
Britain 'not a fairer society'

A GROWING minority believe Tony Blair's Britain has not so far become a fairer or a more equal society according to the Guardian/ICM opinion poll, *writes Alan Travis.* And there remains a large majority which says the Government should give a higher priority to environmental policy even if it means penalising car drivers — the principle at the centre of John Prescott's delayed Transport Bill.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes in national attitudes in the last year revealed by the survey has been over food safety. Concerns over BSE and the fatal *E. coli* outbreak in Scotland seem to have finally struck home and for the first time a majority (52 to 32 per cent) say food is not becoming safer to eat.

The ICM poll shows an alarmingly high level of fear of crime. No fewer than 87 per cent of voters say "people are becoming more worried about falling victim to crime". Even though the recorded crime figures continue to decline, about 43 per cent say they "strongly agree" that they are more worried about crime.

The poll also shows Britain as a country which favours higher taxes to pay for better public services, does not want to see the trade unions given more influence, but believes it is becoming a more modern democracy.





After Starr, the politics

KENNETH STARR'S narrative on the private life of Bill Clinton does not improve on a more leisurely re-reading. Forty million dollars is a big advance by any standards, and four years is a long time to research and write such a story, even one of this length. The plot is a cliché: powerful middle-aged man has guilty fling with ambitious young woman. The sex is snatched, fumbling and incomplete. The ending is trite: middle-aged man calls it off; young woman is distressed. Both lie about the affair. Both are found out. Like many authors of soft pornography, Mr Starr protests that the work is not about sex — that the explicit love scenes are integral to a full understanding of his characters. But his report is not about sex in the sense that Emmanuelle or the cult Japanese film Ai No Corrida are not about sex. It is about sex. By the time you've waded through the 440 pages and 2,000 footnotes you are wondering less about the central characters than about the author. Bill and Monica's doomed relationship is unremarkable, sad and banal. Mr Starr's single-minded act of voyeurism might one day make a much more rewarding story.

But Mr Starr is, for the moment, history. He set out to investigate a swirl of serious allegations concerning real abuses of office. He couldn't make any of it stick. So, instead, he went for the sex. He found it, and he found lies about sex. But the time has come for him to leave the stage. That was legal, this is now political. Congressmen and women are returning to Washington after digesting the report and discussing it with their constituents. It seems plain that the president has no intention of resigning. It is also plain that he is now a terribly damaged politician. He has 28 months still to serve, and yet he has been revealed as a weak, dishonest and in some ways pathetic figure.

The coming weeks will play on a number of levels. At the constitutional level, the House of Representatives will have to approve the rules of engagement for the Judiciary Committee preliminary inquest into the Starr report. They should do so with a view to acting quickly and fairly. Mr Clinton and his lawyers should be allowed an immediate opportunity to see all the additional evidence amassed by Mr Starr and his team. They have until the mid-October recess to decide whether to move for impeachment hearings. Then there is the business of government. This month a long list of appropriation bills in order to keep government running will land on Mr Clinton's desk. Some of them contain Republican-sponsored provisions which — in other circumstances — Mr Clinton might well veto. This will be an early test of his determination to remain actively in charge.

Then there are the mid-term elections. Will the president be seen by his own party as an electoral and finance-raising liability? Finally, there will be Democratic party fears that "other shoes" might materialise. What evidence, however weak, might still emerge about Filegate, or Travelgate? Will the attorney-general appoint an independent counsel to investigate claims of campaign finance abuse in 1992? Are there more of Bill's women out there ready to sell their souls to the National Inquirer? All these questions will jostle with each other as the law-makers try to decide on the best course of action. The rest of us can only watch mutely and hope that a great and powerful nation can settle an unhappy, but essentially trivial, episode with sophistication and speed.

An old Russian hand recalled

RUSSIA'S élite has had a welcome fit of common sense. The nomination of Yevgeny Primakov to be the country's new prime minister bids fair to end the political stalemate of the past few weeks. The new man will start his administration on a strong footing. Russia has been going through a crisis of legitimacy ever since President Boris Yeltsin abruptly appointed a young and unknown lightweight to the prime ministership in spring. Although the Duma made it clear it did not like Sergei Kiriyenko by twice rejecting his nomination, Mr Yeltsin used a variety of threats to persuade the Duma to accept him at the third attempt.

When the president, in his high-handed way, sacked Mr Kiriyenko four months later, it looked as though he was going to try the same tactics of disregarding the Duma's opinion. But the balance of forces has changed. The sudden implosion of Russia's neo-liberal economic policies set the rouble tumbling and led the government to default on some of its debts, causing a new round of inflation. The simmering discontent that had been growing throughout Viktor Chernomyrdin's five years in power burst to the surface when Mr Yeltsin tried to bring him back. To many in the Duma Mr Chernomyrdin was the architect of an economic strategy that had left millions of people waiting for wages and pensions while enriching a few. This time, too, the opposition parties, including the Communists with their hopes for a more interventionist government role in the economy, calculated that Mr Yeltsin's threat to dissolve the Duma would backfire. Discontent with the "reforms" of the Yeltsin period which, to many Russians, have become synonymous with crime, misery, and corruption, would dominate the campaign. The next Duma would probably have more anti-Yeltsin seats.

The Duma's second vote against Mr Chernomyrdin last week showed that he could command only the support of Vladimir Zhirinovsky and the hardline nationalists. It was not the first time that Mr Zhirinovsky's faction has dispelled the notion that some Western analysts liked to peddle, of "democratic reformers pitted against a Red-Brown alliance".

In nominating Mr Primakov it is not yet clear whether Mr Yeltsin will agree to hand over some of his powers to the parliament and the new government team. Whether the solution to the political crisis will go far in solving Russia's massive economic problems is also uncertain. The very fact that an elderly figure with no economic background has become prime minister is a sign of the paucity of talent. But Mr Primakov is an honest and intelligent man, and in no way a crony capitalist. He is what Russians call a *gosudarstvennik*, an experienced professional who understands the need to restore a strong state, albeit on democratic lines, in place of today's chaos and lawlessness.

In the great debate between those who still cling to the neo-liberal economic model and those who wish to put controls on speculative short-term capital and protect the viable parts of Russian industry, his instincts are with the latter. The outside world can only hope that the political ceasefire leads to the stability that millions of ordinary Russians so desperately seek — and deserve.

Beating racism

BRITAIN'S black MPs expressed dismay last week at the latest survey of ethnic minority opinion. They are being too gloomy. The survey shows young black people are far more pessimistic than white people with respect to future British race relations. There is nothing surprising about that. A second generation of black people have much higher expectations than their immigrant parents. This is not a new finding but remains grounds for optimism, not pessimism. Young black people have a lot to protest against. Three forms of racial discrimination continue to persist in Britain: overt and intentional; disguised but deliberate; unintentional but adverse. All three need to be more openly confronted and resisted. An uncompromising younger generation is more likely to achieve this.

It is easy for older people to tick off genuine improvements in race relations over the last generation: the entry of black and Asian people into the professions, the black faces on television and in Parliament, the fact that young people from ethnic minorities are now more likely to continue their education beyond 16 than white people. Then there is last year's massive Policy Studies Institute study monitoring progress on integration: mixed partnerships are now so widespread that nearly half of "Caribbean" children have one white parent. But the same report also documented the glass ceiling barring ethnic minorities from top jobs. It also showed how complicated multiracial Britain had become — differences between ethnic minorities are now larger than the traditional black-white divide.

Where the black MPs are right to be depressed is with the growing disillusion of black and Asian people, with one-quarter not even registering to vote. It is crucial that the political system reaches out to these communities. The Labour party deserves praise for its tougher laws on racially motivated offences but has still not done enough to promote prominent black people within the public service — or place them on the many task forces drawing up its reform programme.

The White House? It's the top job from hell

Peter Preston

WHEN we don't have enough good teachers, we create a legion of superteachers. Too few nurses? Here come the super-sisters. These are recognised problems of recruitment where answers have to be found. But does anybody today talk of the need to create some super presidents of the United States? And if not, why not? This is the lousiest recruitment of the lot.

Bill Clinton, sorrowful pundits intone, is "the most extravagantly gifted politician of his generation". Really? It doesn't say much for the rest of the class of the nineties. He is swift and affable and sharp and eloquent: but he pounded the campaign trail six years ago already burdened with questions of character. Gennifer Flowers — and a chorus of other accusers — came before, not after, his election.

When he and Hillary sat on that sofa in New Hampshire long ago and he talked contritely about "the pain I have brought to my marriage", he signalled troubles past and troubles to come in neon lights. Yet Americans still elected him. They did so because he was the best leader they saw through the months of the primaries as the other mightbes turned into has-beens.

In 1990 George Bush had broken the promise everyone remembered, because it hit them in their pockets. "Read my lips. No new taxes." He looked what he also was: a perennial appointee and chair-filler who drifted haplessly when events got too big for him because his whole life had consisted of shuffling papers to a higher authority. He quailed before the monster called Ross Perot in a flap of hands.

And two years ago, the choice was even punier. Newt Gingrich — in arrogance, crassness and marital infidelity — had self-destructed. The party of governance; the party that controlled the Senate and the House, let poor, sick, old Bob Dole sacrifice himself in a cause no one believed in. The Clinton of Whitewater and Paula Jones and Ken Starr in full flood cruised home. He was still the best.

Such fragments of context make two relevant cases. One (smaller, more immediate) is that it would be idiotic if Clinton didn't survive. So he has brought "a little more pain to his marriage": so what? That was always a given in the bargain the voters struck when they elected him. They should be grateful that, on the "high crimes and misdemeanours" of bribery and corruption, Starr came up empty-handed.

But the longer-term case is far more serious.

The "golden age" that most Americans now fondly recall is the era of Ronald Reagan. Dream on. It isn't good enough — and for good reason. The system actively deters talent, experience and wisdom. It repels the sentient. It attracts only the second-rate, the flawed and the deluded.

Consider the underlying situation even today. Whether Clinton goes or stays, there is already a clutch of Republicans out there chewing rubber chickens on the circuit of availability. Who would you bet on first? Probably George Bush Jr, the governor of Texas turned from a wild and reprobate youth into a middle-aged pillar of sanctity. He preaches moral purity; he signs his execution warrants; he operates outside the Washington beltway.

But Texas politics make Arkansas look nursery stuff. The experience — and the period of reformation — seem ominously thin. Is Junior the saviour America needs, the brightest and the best?

No: like Jimmy Carter and Reagan and Clinton before him, like every president of the past 35 years who did not have the springboard of the vice-presidency to propel him into the Oval Office, Bush has the platform and the apparatus which makes campaigning possible.

He has a base to operate from which allows him to fly hither and yon, to eat the chickens and pump the hands. He is stuck with neither the incubus of Washington nor its demands of committees and votes. He is available because his job allows him to be available.

The grind of the system favours only a certain sort of candidate and excludes all those who can't or don't want to spend their lives running — and running — for office. Without money there is no visibility. Without visibility there is no money. Would be commanders-in-chief have to crawl their way to the top.

Beyond the system, though, lurks a larger and fresher deterrent. The job itself is becoming impossible.

IS THERE power to it? You can blow up Sudanese medical factories, of course. But the Congress — by voter demand — is usually stacked against you on everything from Medicare to campaign funding reform. There is only the nuanced appearance of power.

Arrive new in office and, in a trice, your ancient foes from the boondocks will be whipping up a special prosecutor to traipse over everything you've done for the past 20 years and, failing there, to turn himself into a permanent office of investigation. You can't use your White House staff to fend off such challenges. The state pays for Starr, but you have to borrow millions to fend him off. When you quit, you'll be a poor man. If you quit in shame you will be ruined.

The Secret Service guards who travel with you can be called to testify against you. So can your closest staff and the lawyers you most naturally turn to. You are watched every moment of every day.

And if you stray, if a girl down the corridor lifts her skirts in a flash of thong, what then? Without a shadow of doubt, after Monica Lewinsky, such temptation will always feature somewhere in the high crimes and misdemeanours pantheon. Extramarital sex of any kind is now a presidential story and a rope around the neck.

Forget President Warren Harding making love to his mistress in a White House coat closet while his security guard watched the door. Forget John F Kennedy asking his guards to a party. The loves of Franklyn Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson and Thomas Jefferson will soon be clamouring to get in on this ludicrous act.

World's only superpower seeks new chief executive.

It doesn't sound much of a job, does it?

Le Monde

Grass gives his support to Greens

Arnaud Leparmentier in Erfurt

THE DAYS in the sixties when the writer Günter Grass used to go canvassing with his friend Willy Brandt, when German intellectuals were on the same wavelength as the Social Democrats (SPD), now seem so remote. Gerhard Schröder, the SPD candidate challenging Chancellor Helmut Kohl at the September 27 general election, is certainly no intellectual.

Grass, aged 71, is now campaigning for the Greens. The author of The Tin Drum drifted away from the SPD in 1992, when the party backed plans to change the constitution so as to restrict the right of asylum.

"I'll cast my first vote in favour of the Social Democratic candidate in my constituency," Grass explains. "But the people for whom I feel respect and, even more, sympathy, are the Greens. I'll give them my second vote."

The second vote is crucial, in that it determines the number of deputies each party has in the Bundestag, while the first vote serves to designate, individually, those who will sit in the federal parliament.

Grass has appeared at election meetings in Schwerin, Leipzig, Weimar and Erfurt, all in former East Germany. He has lost most of his following in the West, particularly since the publication in 1995 of his novel, Ein Weites Feld, which compares the reunification of 1990 to the German unity engineered by Bismarck in 1871. It was given a drubbing by the critics.

Grass got a full house at the Church of St Thomas in Erfurt. "He's committed himself on our behalf — he understands what we feel deeply about," said a delighted old-age pensioner.

Yet Grass did not touch on unemployment, the campaign's key issue and the main concern of former East Germans, 18 per cent of whom are out of work. He preferred to concentrate on three other issues: German unification, pacifism and the treatment of immigrants.

Grass, who has described reunification as an "Anschluss" (echoing the Nazi annexation



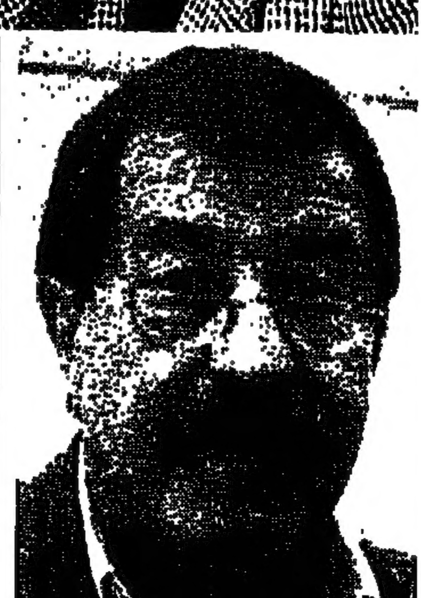
The Greens' leader, Joschka Fischer, above, has Günter Grass's backing in the elections

of Austria in 1938), argued in favour of introducing a new constitution, to be ratified by the German electorate, which would include such notions as the right to work, mention the crimes of Auschwitz and take account of the history of East Germans.

Grass received a warmer response from the audience when he tackled his other pet theme: pacifism. He received thunderous applause when he said that the money spent on the Eurofighter plane "would be better invested in universities and vocational training".

But his main hobbyhorse is the treatment of immigrants. In his view, Germany has become a totalitarian country. The Kohl government "keeps refugees behind bars in expulsion camps, as though they were criminals. He hands over the hounded to their executioners in Nigeria, Algeria and Turkey."

Such charges enrage Kohl, who likes to remind people that Germany took in more than 60



per cent of refugees from the former Yugoslavia. The treatment of foreigners, an issue that only the Greens bring up in Germany, is not something that particularly interests former East Germans.

Grass is aware of this. "I know there is latent xenophobia in the new Länder, even though there are far fewer foreigners here than in the West," he told the good people of Erfurt.

(September 8)

Azerbaijan seeks to keep Russia at bay

Marie Jégo in Baku

THE Azeri capital, Baku, seems so far to have escaped the economic hurricane that has devastated Russia, its neighbour to the north.

In an attempt to recapture its former glory, enjoyed at the end of the 19th century when the Nobels and the Rothschilds pioneered the oil industry in the region, Baku has decided to give itself a new image. The use of the Cyrillic alphabet has virtually disappeared. New roadsigns have sprouted everywhere.

Multinationals have set up business on the sea front. The Russian oil company, Lukoil, has preferred to locate its offices in a luxury mansion in the old town.

Russia, Azerbaijan's biggest trading partner after Turkey, has an interest in the various projects to operate offshore oilfields in the Caspian Sea (proven reserves: 78 billion barrels). But the Russian oil companies' stake is tiny compared with that of the Anglo-American giants.

The BP-Amoco partnership has a 34 per cent share (compared with Lukoil's 10 per cent) in the Azerbaijan International Operating Consortium (AIOC), which will operate two oilfields under the terms of an $8-billion "contract of the century" signed in 1994 by the Azeri national company, Socar, and 11 oil firms.

Azerbaijan, which became independent in 1991, rapidly got rid of its Russian bases and contingents of border guards (unlike its Transcaucasian neighbours, Armenia and Georgia), and now seems to have eased itself out of the sphere of influence of its overbearing neighbour.

A big future oil exporter and nerve centre of hydrocarbon transport, the strategically located Azerbaijan, hemmed in by a de facto alliance of Iran, Russia and Armenia, has preferred to throw in its lot with the United States-Turkey axis.

"We're keeping a close eye on what's going in Moscow, but I don't think we'll be affected," says the prime minister, Artur Rasi-Zade. Azeri officials say that they are less worried about the Russian crisis than about the repercussions of a fall in world crude prices on an economy that is totally dependent on the energy sector.

Oil accounts for 60 per cent of budgetary revenue and exports, and 70 per cent of inward investment is concentrated in that sector. Oil enables Azerbaijan to boast the best macroeconomic performance of all the former Soviet republics: increasing GDP (up by 8.5 per cent over the first few months of 1998), annual inflation held down to 7 per cent in 1997, a tight budgetary policy and a steady manat (the Azeri currency launched in August 1992) against the dollar.

Oil revenues and bonuses (oil companies' right of entry into consortia, estimated to be worth $15-$20 million per well) have enabled Azerbaijan to net $1 billion before any sharing of production, and thus to avoid getting deeply into debt as Armenia and Georgia have done.

Plummeting oil prices have come as a reminder to the Azeri government that there are dangers in being overdependent on oil. "Azerbaijan wants to develop other sectors of its economy," President Heydar Aliyev told the French junior minister for foreign trade, Jacques Dondoux, on September 1 when he visited Baku to promote French investment.

The French companies active in the region — not just the oil giants Elf and Total, but small groups such as Castel, which has bought two breweries in Baku — praise the favourable business environment, and in particular what they describe as the "political stability" resulting from Aliyev's autocratic rule. They find the present political situation congenial, coming after the 1990-93 period, which saw four presidents and three coups.

But outside the oil sector the economic fabric lies in ruins. Sumgait, 30km outside Baku, was once the Soviet Union's largest petrochemical complex. It now presents an apocalyptic landscape — a jumble of ghost factories with shattered window-panes, chimneys that no longer belch smoke, and rusting pipelines half-submerged in murky pools of water.

This picture of decline gives a good idea of the kind of upheavals that hit the region as soon as independence was proclaimed. Since then, industrial output has steadily fallen and companies' outstanding payments account for no less than 65 per cent of GDP.

(September 8)

Trial sheds light on Lithuania's Nazi past

Antoine Jacob in Stockholm

THE first trial of an alleged Nazi war criminal to take place in an independent Baltic state opened on September 9 in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius. A 91-year-old Lithuanian, Aleksandras Lileikis, stands accused of genocide. It is alleged that he handed over 75 Jews to the Nazis, who occupied the country between 1941 and 1944.

Up until the last moment it seemed likely that, because of his ill health, Lileikis would be unable to appear in court.

Lithuania's Jewish community, which first settled in the country in the 14th century, was one of the most active in Europe until the second world war. A Yiddish culture managed to establish itself independently of the various authorities — Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, German — that ruled over this Baltic territory.

In 1940, when the country was occupied by the Red Army, the community consisted of almost 260,000 Jews. They were already beginning to be persecuted. Things worsened considerably with the arrival of Nazi troops, who were assisted in their task by several thousand Lithuanian collaborators. More than 90 per cent of the Jewish community was killed.

"Lithuania is the country where the largest number of Jews in proportion to the total population died," says 70-year-old Simonas Alperavicius, who heads the small Jewish community of fewer than 5,000 still living in Lithuania.

The question is: was Lileikis one of the collaborators who zealously assisted the Nazis? He admitted in 1996 that he ran the Lithuanian security service in Vilnius. That admission cost him his American citizenship, which he had obtained after managing to flee to the United States in 1955. Since his extradition to Lithuania two years ago, he has denied responsibility for the acts of which he stands accused.

It took a long time for the trial to be organised. Lileikis's frail health and the necessary changes to the Lithuanian penal code helped to slow things down, to the annoyance of Jewish organisations in Lithuania and abroad, and of the United States Congress.

The trial raises delicate issues in a country that emerged from half a century of communist rule in 1990. On the one hand, some Lithuanians still associate the Jews with the Soviet occupation. The Red Army relied on local Jewish communists to consolidate its rule, and a good number worked for the Soviet secret police, the KGB.

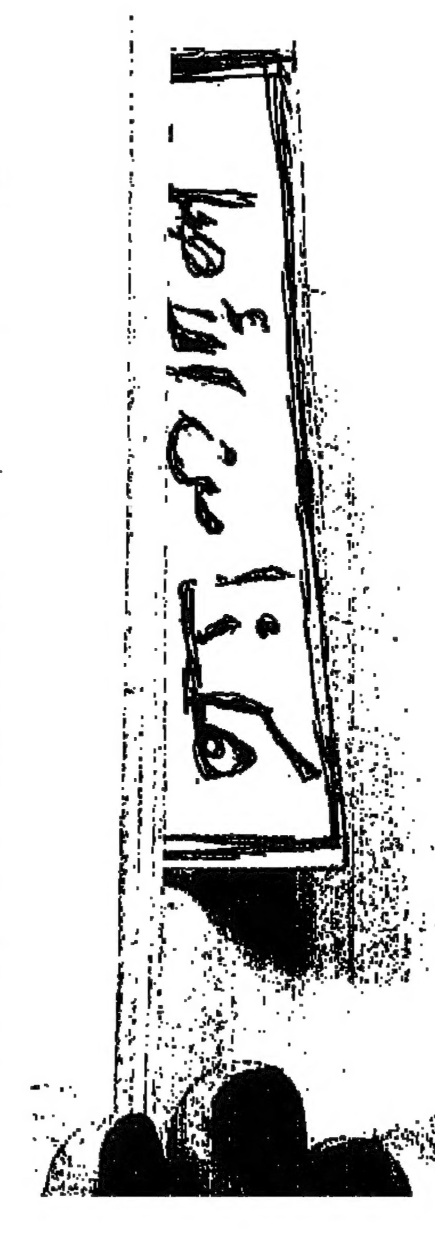
But the post-war communist regime was by no means kind to those who had survived the ghettos. And even today there is the occasional resurgence of anti-Semitism.

"No history book mentions the fact that Jews were killed by Lithuanians," Alperavicius says.

Though some of those who collaborated with the Germans were tried and executed after the war, the charge against them was that they had "opposed the communist regime", according to Alperavicius, who managed to escape from Vilnius but lost 46 members of his family.

To shed light on what really happened during and after the second world war, President Valdas Adamkus set up a commission of inquiry on September 7 into war crimes committed during the Nazi and Soviet occupations.

(September 10)



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 20 1998

Hopes burn bright for oil revenue despite Western fears of rural disruption and environmental disaster. **Thomas Sotinel** reports from Doba

Mixed blessings of Chad's black gold

AT GROUND level there are small trees, which are felled for firewood before they have a chance to grow, fields of millet and cotton, and huts with straw roofs. There are no paved roads, no schools, no electricity and only a few clinics. In this part of southern Chad, when you are rich you buy yourself a corrugated iron roof or a bicycle.

Below ground there are 900 million barrels of black, viscous oil. Although of poor quality, the deposit is big enough to have attracted a consortium of oil companies (Esso, Shell and Elf). Work will begin by the end of the year, as soon as the financing of the project is tied up. By 2001, more than 300 wells will have been drilled 30km south of Doba, in east Logone prefecture. A 1,000km pipeline will cross southern Chad and Cameroon to the Atlantic port of Kribi.

There are political as well as geographical difficulties. Before becoming an oilfield the region was a battlefield. Southern Chadians have not yet stomached their defeat at the hands of the north in the early eighties, which brought Goukouni Oueddei, Hissène Habré and Idriss Déby, the current president, to power. There are occasional outbreaks of guerrilla warfare, which are ruthlessly put down.

The latest episode pitted Laokein Bardé and his rebel Armed Forces for the Federal Republic (Farf) against government troops from October 1997 to May 1998. Several hundred people died, including Muslim traders from the north, who were burnt alive by the Farf, and peasants massacred by the Nomad Guard from the north.

Southerners, most of them animist, Catholic or Protestant government employees and farmers, feel they have been oppressed by Muslim outsiders, who are traders, stockbreeders or senior officials in the army and civil service.

Despite the sad example of neighbouring Nigeria, where the extraction of oil by Shell has destroyed the environment, agricultural wealth and freedom of the Ogonis and other peoples, no one in Chad opposes the oil project.

The possible environmental disaster feared by Western ecological organisations is not something that preoccupies farmers in Bero, a village close to the site of some of the 300 future wells. "Esso is going to change Bero," says Daingar Ndingambaye, head of the canton. The multinational has already built a school. Villagers hope it will also provide jobs.

When activity on the site peaks in about 2000, up to 3,000 people will be employed drilling wells, digging a trench for the pipeline and building infrastructure. But the oil boom will not last for ever: only 250 people will be needed to operate the oilfield, and currently proven reserves will run out in about 2030.

Earlier drilling for oil is not fondly remembered in the area. Parker Drilling and Western Geophysics did not always compensate farmers whose fields were "impacted", to use the industry's jargon. Esso, which plans to provide compensation in cash, in kind and through the provision of jobs, will give priority when taking on staff to farmers whose fields have been "impacted".

Esso has been explaining to people that more than a third of the 3,000 jobs going will be taken up by expatriates. Even so, it is hard to convince them that it is far from certain they will find employment. "We've noticed in three parishes that the number of people tilling the fields has dropped," says Father Gabriel Reoutar, who heads a Catholic NGO. "They keep on singing that they're going to find work."

With members of other aid organisations, he took part in the talks on compensation for farmers. He feels the amounts agreed on were "fairly reasonable". What worries him more are the social and economic imbalances the project will cause. He thinks the drift from the land and the influx of expatriate labour will cause food prices to rocket.

Property speculation has begun in the towns of the region, Doba and Moundou. The deputy prefect of Doba says: "Businessmen are flocking here from all over Chad to buy up plots of land so that they can open shops while the complex is being built. The price of land has doubled."

Then there is the problem of security. Esso employees are always escorted by gendarmes, to protect them against the groups of highwaymen found throughout central Africa. Many local inhabitants dread the massive deployment of security forces when work on the site starts.

Despite all the fears and uncertainties, everyone in the south and in the capital, N'djaména, is looking forward to the first gush of oil. Chad's annual budget is about the same as that of the film Titanic: $200 million. That sum will double once the oilfield is under operation.

For the moment Chad is not rich enough to break out of the vicious circle of underdevelopment. "One could give them the money to build roads," says a funding agency representative. "But they won't have enough money to maintain them."

Déby's regime gets an "average" rating from the consortium and the World Bank as regards transparency and its willingness to fight corruption. That is why the World Bank, whose role is in theory to finance development, will help the three oil multinationals to build the pipeline. Esso and its partners are relying on the World Bank to ensure that Chad uses its oil revenue judiciously, thus stabilising the political situation and providing arguments that can be used against Western critics of the project.

Chad will get a loan of $45 million and Cameroon $70 million, which will enable the two countries to acquire a stake in the company operating the pipeline. In return the World Bank will want Chad to place its oil revenues in a special account with the Bank of Central African States that would be under the World Bank's control. Much against its will, Chad has apparently resigned itself to this loss of sovereignty.

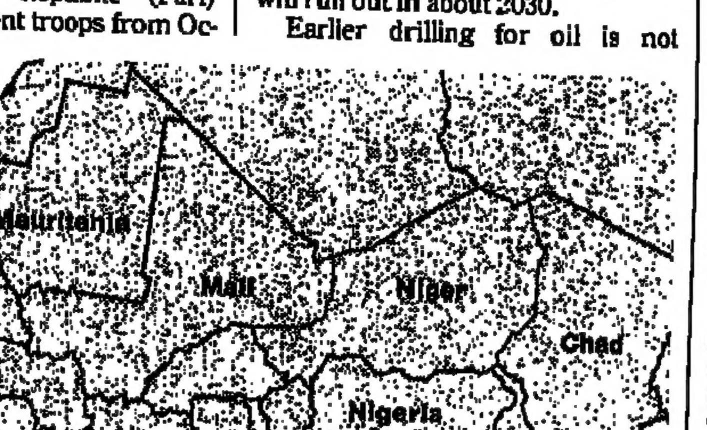
All has not been easy for N'djaména. While it has been agreed that Chad will receive royalties of 12.5 per cent of the crude oil price from the consortium, the latter will enjoy almost total tax exemption, which will be lifted only in the (as yet) unlikely event of the price per barrel rising above $17.

What is more, the World Bank loan has been made at the market rate, after certain Western countries refused to let an oil project benefit from conditions normally granted only to development aid. This will shave Chad's revenues by about $5 million.

The agreement should be completed by the end of the year. Both sides still have cards up their sleeve: the World Bank could pull out if human rights abuses worsen in the south, while N'djaména could turn to other sources of finance such as Libya.

But the figures are more eloquent than any other factor. The consortium has already sunk more than $700 million into the Doba region. For better or for worse, it looks as though Chad will be swept into the third millennium on a tide of Doba crude.

(September 3)



Mauritania fights to keep aid lifeline

Jean-Pierre Tuquoi
in Nouakchott

THERE are a number of subjects best avoided in Mauritania. The most sensitive of these is slavery, which was officially abolished only at the beginning of the eighties. When a brief foreign television report suggested last year that a certain form of slavery still existed, and that the government was turning a blind eye to it, the government reacted angrily, giving long jail sentences to five human rights activists. They were pardoned only after international pressure had been exerted on President Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya.

The president took his surprise decision because Mauritania cannot afford to blot its copybook in the eyes of the West, and particularly of France, the former colonial power. Mauritania is a desperately poor country. Foreign aid alone prevents many of its inhabitants from starving to death. Aid has also enabled electricity to be brought to the main towns and a national road network to be built. "International aid finances almost 80 per cent of the state's investment budget," according to a foreign diplomat.

Slavery is not the only issue that could tarnish Mauritania's image and jeopardise aid. The Germans regard the fishing issue as equally urgent. Some of the world's richest fishing grounds lie off the Mauritanian coast. More than 500 trawlers flying a multitude of flags fish the waters intensively without any respect for the need to renew fish stocks, often without authorisation and sometimes in collusion with Mauritania's political leaders.

Germany, a leading provider of funds to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, has threatened to make its support for Mauritania conditional on Nouakchott coming up with a fishing plan worthy of the name.

The two incidents have come at a very bad time for Ould Taya's regime: it is trying to get its international creditors to agree to reduce Mauritania's foreign debt. "From 1999 on, Nouakchott will start repaying the principal of the debt," said a funding agency official. "It will have to come up with $150 million a year, or half the state's operating budget. As it can't do that, it will have to get the debt reduced."

Even if it manages to hammer out a satisfactory agreement, Mauritania will still not be out of the woods. According to IMF and World Bank regulations, a three-year probation period has to precede the actual reduction of the debt. During those three years Mauritania will be forced to comply with its creditors' wishes. A foreign diplomat predicts that "international organisations will insist on Mauritania implementing all the reforms it has refused to carry out over the past 15 years".

Not that Nouakchott has done nothing over those years of "adjustment". The government has put its financial house in order. The country, whose wealth derives from fishing and iron ore, has high official growth figures, while the percentage of children in full-time education puts neighbouring countries in the shade.

The regime, which took power in a coup, is becoming more democratic. There were five candidates at the last presidential election. There is relative freedom of the press, and it is generally agreed that there are no more political prisoners.

But a more disturbing side of Mauritania can be detected behind this rosy façade: the spectre of ethnic divisions is again raising its ugly head.

The Moorish Smassids, few in number but skilful traders, stand accused of monopolising strategic posts in the army and civil service since Ould Taya — himself a Smassid — came to power in 1984.

Through two private groups, Smassids also control most imports, along with banking, transport, insurance and fishing. Significantly, 80 per cent of all value added tax collected in Mauritania is paid by only 12 taxpayers.

Meanwhile the country's civil service is in a state of total collapse. To survive, it is forced to re-allocate for its own use some of the international aid it receives.

"The regime's Achilles heel, and the only threat to it, are the inhabitants of shanty towns, who can compare the wealth of a small group of privileged people with their own destitution," warns Béchir El Hassen, a former opposition member.

In shanty towns water is brought in by donkeys and costs seven times as much as in the city centre. There is no electricity. Cholera is rife. Aware of the danger of an uprising in the shanty towns, the government has said it will set up a commission to fight poverty. That may serve as a sop to the funding agencies, but it is unlikely to go down well in the slums.

(September 2)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 20 1998

Low Crimes and Misdemeanors

EDITORIAL

KENNETH STARR'S report to Congress on evidence of possibly impeachable conduct by President Clinton paints a devastating portrait of Mr. Clinton's behavior, honor, candor and respect for the obligations and dignity of his office. The compilation is such that Congress has no choice but to initiate an impeachment inquiry exploring seriously both the allegations themselves and the threshold standard for the impeachment and removal of a president.

As a starting point, Mr. Starr offers compelling evidence that the president lied under oath both in his deposition in the Paula Jones suit and before the grand jury investigating the corruption of evidence in that case. The president lied about his sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky. He lied about being alone with her. He lied about conversations with her concerning her prospective testimony. And Mr. Starr contends he lied about his conversations with Vernon Jordan concerning her. The report also demonstrates that the president bald-facedly lied to his aides, his Cabinet and the American people. While these latter lies are not criminal acts, it is certainly appropriate for Congress and the public generally to consider them in assessing Mr. Clinton's fitness for office.

Mr. Starr also presents disturbing — though not conclusive — evidence that the president obstructed justice in the Jones case. Mr. Starr's evidence that the president had an implicit understanding with Ms. Lewinsky that both would give false testimony about their relationship is quite strong. Also damning is Ms. Lewinsky's testimony about the circumstances under which Mr. Clinton's secretary, Betty Currie, retrieved the president's gifts to Ms. Lewinsky even while those gifts were under subpoena. And though Ms. Currie's testimony contradicts Ms. Lewinksy's, it does so quite equivocally, and Mr. Starr's conclusion that the president orchestrated the transfer is one Congress will need to study. It will also need to examine closely Mr. Starr's claim that the president tampered with a potential witness when he met with Ms. Currie after his deposition and presented her with a series of statements about the relationship that both the president and Ms. Currie knew to be false. Congress should also scrutinize Mr. Starr's somewhat less well-supported contention that the aid Ms. Lewinksy received in her job hunt from the White House was intended to corrupt her testimony. There is, in short, ample evidence in Mr. Starr's report of presidential conduct that Congress could deem grounds for impeachment.

Unfortunately, however, Mr. Starr did not satisfy himself with making allegations that the evidence unambiguously supports, nor did he act in the restrained manner we would have hoped. Despite the report's repeated protestations that the president's testimony necessitated describing the affair in lurid detail, a clear demonstration that Mr. Clinton's conduct constituted "sexual relations" under any definition could have been accomplished by discreet citations to grand-jury transcripts and exhibits. The decision to write the report in a form that resembles a steamy paperback smacks of an effort to embarrass the president.

In addition, some of Mr. Starr's allegations are insufficiently supported. It is a stretch, for example, for Mr. Starr to claim that the president committed obstruction when he lied to his aides knowing that they would then testify falsely before the grand jury. Mr. Starr further accuses the president of abusing his constitutional authority by failing to cooperate with Mr. Starr's own investigation, declining several times to testify before the grand jury and asserting executive privilege. Mr. Starr's arrogant contention that mounting a vigorous defense against Mr. Starr is an impeachable offense is difficult to support.

Even more arrogant is the aggressive advocacy for impeachment in Mr. Starr's document. To be sure, this advocacy is always couched in language superficially respectful of the constitutional fact that Congress — not any prosecutor — has the power to impeach the president. Yet the willingness of the prosecutors to draw inferences and make judgments plainly designed to color Congress' judgment is unmistakable and sharply in contrast to the restraint shown by the special prosecutor during Watergate.

Mr. Starr's errors, however, do not save Mr. Clinton. For even when the excesses are stripped away, the case he has presented is serious, while Mr. Clinton's current defense is contemptible. The notion that oral sex performed on the president did not meet the definition of sex used at the deposition is sophistry so tortured that no satirist would have deemed it plausible enough to be humorous. And it ill becomes the president to argue that literally truthful statements are not perjury "no matter how misleading the testimony is or is intended to be."

Finally, his factual claim that the sexual relationship was limited to Ms. Lewinsky's performing oral sex on Mr. Clinton is directly contradicted both by Ms. Lewinsky's testimony and her significant contemporaneous communications.

The question that Congress now faces is whether the president's public conduct warrants impeachment and removal. It is not an easy question, and it goes to the heart of what does and does not constitute "high crimes and misdemeanors." Mr. Clinton's behavior is at the margins of impeachability — straddling the line that separates disqualifying crimes from conduct that merely mars indelibly the presidential office and the man who holds it.

Allies Call for Clinton to Accept Censure

David S. Broder

LEADING Democrats last Saturday put public pressure on President Clinton to drop his arguments that he did not commit perjury and instead signal his readiness to accept congressional censure for attempting to conceal an extramarital affair with a White House intern.

Even as some Clinton loyalists and lawyers denounced independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr for the salacious details he included in referring the case to Congress on Friday last week for possible impeachment proceedings, new cracks began appearing in White House defenses.

Former White House chief of staff Leon E. Panetta said in a telephone interview last Saturday that the time has come "to stop the legal quibbling about whether he lied about that sexual relationship. It's clear he misled the country. He needs to cooperate with Congress, not engage in the same tactics he has for the last seven months."

Philadelphia Mayor Edward Rendell, a Democrat and ally of the president, said, "If I were calling signals for the Republicans, I'd have the congressional leaders say, 'What the president did was horrible and reprehensible, but it had nothing to do with his office. So we want a unanimous vote to censure him, and then get on with the business of the country.'" But Rendell added that the partisan lines are so sharp in Washington, "there's probably zero chance of that happening."

Across the country, politicians, pollsters and other political observers reported shock and dismay as the details of the Starr report reached people through saturation media coverage. But the extent of the damage to the president and other Democrats remained uncertain.

"People are very upset," said California Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa (D). "They feel the president did wrong. We fear it could impact turnout here."

After attending three civic events in Republican counties of central Illinois, Rep. Ray LaHood, R-Illinois, reported, "It's a mixed bag. People are upset, they're shocked, they're concerned about the future of the country. But there's no majority one way or another on what should come next. There's just sadness for the office of the president and concern about our standing in the world."

There appeared to be growing support among political insiders for the notion that a formal censure of the president was the appropriate measure.

"A censure or reprimand is probably where we're headed," said Panetta, adding that "six or seven months of debate in Congress about possible impeachment will only do that much more damage to the presidency and Congress."

The only way to avoid that, he said, is for GOP leaders of Congress to agree quickly that the charges detailed in the Starr report really come down to "lying about sex" and for the president's lawyers to abandon their efforts to deny that he committed perjury in his deposition in the Paula Jones lawsuit and in his grand jury testimony last month.

"This presidency is never going to be the same," Panetta said, "and that is something [Clinton] is going to have to bear. That is toll enough."

Some veterans of past Republican administrations echoed Panetta's judgment. Marlin Fitzwater, press secretary to Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, said, "I don't think people will see this as 'high crimes and misdemeanors,'" the Constitution's description of impeachable offenses. "They'll feel disgusted and think him an unworthy president who violated his oath of office. But I think they'll come down on the side of censure, rather than impeachment."

Linda DiVall, a pollster with many GOP congressional clients, offered a political reason for Republicans' attempting to resolve the situation quickly. Calling Clinton's political position "pathetic," she said future reports from Starr on other matters he has investigated, plus the possibility of an independent counsel examination of Clinton's 1996 campaign finance practices, could force Congress to consider impeachment. But, she said, "Congress has a very high job rating now, and my fear is that the longer it has to deal with this tawdry matter, the more it may be brought down."

Some longtime allies of the president vented their ire on Starr. Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, a former state supreme court justice, said, "There was no excuse for the graphic information he put into a report that goes out on the Internet. It was entirely unnecessary to prove his case."

Rendell said what he heard on the streets of his city last Saturday morning was "people who are irate that we spent $40 million to investigate Whitewater and we end up with a report that has two references to Whitewater and 548 descriptions of sex."

Dan Balz adds: President Clinton's lawyers last Saturday issued a scathing rebuttal to Starr's report, denouncing it as "pornographic" and "a hit-and-run smear campaign" whose legal foundation was so weak "that no prosecutor would present [it] to any jury."

The White House rebuttal acknowledged repeatedly that Clinton's relationship with Lewinsky was wrong, but it concluded with a series of declarations that underscored the president's statement on Friday last week that he would ask his lawyers to mount a vigorous defense in his behalf.

"The president did not commit perjury," the White House response stated. "He did not obstruct justice. He did not tamper with witnesses. And he did not abuse the power of the office of the presidency."



GUARDIAN W... September ...

Former Russian Spy Takes Centre Stage

Daniel Williams in Moscow

HE'S A SPY turned foreign minister who has campaigned tirelessly to make a weakened Russia a force in world affairs. Now he is turning his talents to keep Russia from sinking into a bottomless economic decline.

Yevgeny Primakov, Russia's new prime minister-in-waiting, was thrust last week into the whirlwind of one of post-Soviet Russia's most difficult crises. It is not clear how he will direct the drama, for although his career in public service is long, it gives few clues on how he plans to rescue Russia from its economic free fall.

One thing is certain. With President Boris Yeltsin clearly in a weakened political condition and with fragile health taking a toll on his abilities, Primakov has become the central figure in Russian politics.

"He will be wearing the hat not only of prime minister but of president," predicted Sergei Karaganov, a political analyst and a longtime Primakov associate.

Primakov's ascension to prime minister in some ways parallels his nomination as foreign minister more than 2½ years ago. In both cases, he was elevated to defuse domestic political tensions. In early 1996, Yeltsin was bedeviled by foreign policy critics who complained that Russia had sold out to the West. Primakov made foreign policy a non-issue in Russia by distancing himself from the United States; he contended Washington was trying to dominate the globe.

Since then, Primakov set out to reassert Russian influence in several areas, frequently to Washington's discomfort. In the name of establishing a "multipolar" world system, he partially reestablished Moscow's weight in the Middle East. He renewed political support for old Soviet allies, in particular Iraq's Saddam Hussein: That policy helped weaken Washington's resolve to punish Saddam for obstructing U.N. weapons inspections.

Primakov also has lobbied against the expansion of NATO into Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic but acquiesced after negotiating a special relationship with the Atlantic Alliance, designed to give Russia a say in NATO affairs. He has, however, drawn a line at proposed expansion into the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. NATO must not be permitted to use facilities of the former Soviet republics, he contends.

He persistently opposes the use of force by NATO to pressure Yugoslavia to end its anti-separatist war in the Serbian province of Kosovo. And in the face of complaints from the United States and Israel, Primakov has denied that Russia has supplied Iran with technology useful in building medium- and long-range missiles. He said any leakage was on a freelance basis beyond the government's control.

For all his disagreements with the United States, he concurs on one key unresolved issue: ratification of the START II nuclear arms reduction treaty. He persistently has urged Russia's reluctant legislature to endorse it.

Many analysts attribute Primakov's rise to the premiership as a function of his lack of a record on reform of Russia's economy. He has made no ideological enemies. "I would say one of his advantages is that he is a tabula rasa," said Vladimir Mau, who heads a government research center.

Primakov is not a trained economist. He has no links to big business nor is he closely associated with the young reformers who had directed Russia's economy in recent years. His membership on the Communist Party Central Committee during the late years of the Soviet Union means he is familiar with the still gargantuan Russian bureaucracy. That history also makes him acceptable to the Communists and other leftists; yet some liberals do not regard him as ideologically committed to Marxism.



Yevgeny Primakov addresses foreign MPs in Moscow last week

Recently, Primakov hinted at some views on economics. In June, he told a meeting of business leaders in Switzerland that Russia had erred "because of a heavy policy tilt toward macroeconomic stabilization" — a direct criticism of policies designed to keep inflation under control and the ruble strong.

He said Russia erred by "depending too heavily on the continuing inflows of foreign capital." He suggested that foreign money needed to be be replaced by funds that Russians had spirited out of the country illegally. The government must also raise tax revenues.

He suggested a New Deal for Russia, emulating steps he said US President Franklin D. Roosevelt took: "some state measures, some tax measures that benefited the development of industry."

As imprecise as this position seems, it places Primakov close to the tack taken by Yeltsin's abandoned nominee, Viktor Chernomyrdin, who pledged to print money to stimulate growth, pay back wages to workers and crack down on tax evaders. Many economic observers think such a formula unworkable at best and a recipe for disaster at worst. "Very strong political will is required of the prime minister to say and do extremely unpopular things," said Mau. "I am not sure [Primakov] has the guts and opportunities to do it."

Is Israel Demanding What's Being Done?

COMMENT
Lee Hockstader

ONE paradox of the comatose Middle East peace process is this: Israel insists it will make no deal to advance the peace until Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority does more to combat terror and ensure the Jewish state's security. To hammer home that message, the government complains the Palestinians not only fail to fight terror, but actively encourage it.

Yet, judging by the numbers of victims of Palestinian attacks, Israel has not been so secure from terror in more than a decade.

According to figures from the prime minister's office — which uses a more inclusive definition of terror than even the Israeli army — there have been fewer Israelis killed by terrorists in the last two years — 36 — than in any comparable period since 1987-88.

No one can guarantee there will not be another uptick in bloodletting if the political winds shift. Moreover, while the death toll since 1996 may be modest compared to previous periods, hundreds more have been injured, some severely. And some planned terrorist strikes against Israel fizzled either because of intervention and effective intelligence or because of simple luck. And Israel remains one of the most security-obsessed societies on Earth.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that by most measures, the struggle between Arabs and Jews in Israel has become among the least violent of the world's low-intensity conflicts.

It is against this backdrop that Washington has launched its latest diplomatic initiative to break the 18-month logjam in the Israeli-Palestinian talks. Yet as Dennis Ross, the chief U.S. Middle East envoy, shuttles between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, security issues continue to occupy center stage, and there has been no perceptible shift in Israel's contention that the Palestinian Authority has done little to combat terror on the territory it controls.

The reasons for the diminution of violence against Israelis are a subject of ideologically charged debate. The right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu suggests it deserves credit for the dip by making clear to the Palestinians that no further concessions will be made if terror attacks persist. At the same time, it contends that Arafat's security forces have done little to dismantle Hamas, the militant Islamic group that has carried out bloody attacks in the past.

But the Palestinian Authority insists terror is down because its security apparatus has stopped Hamas in its tracks by seizing weapons and intensifying surveillance. To do more, it argues — to move against the schools, clubs and other institutions that comprise Hamas' infrastructure — would be to trigger civil war on the territory Arafat controls.

Whatever the case, the decline in terror goes nearly unremarked in Israel. Netanyahu rarely mentions that attacks have slackened since he took office, and no one seems inclined to believe that a new security climate may prevail.

One explanation is that Israeli Jews cannot quickly forget the carnage that filled their television screens in early 1996, when Hamas suicide bombers killed dozens of people on city buses and in a Tel Aviv shopping center. Those blasts, and others like them, also destroyed the idea that the Oslo peace accord of 1993 had brought Israel a respite from terror.

"The frequency of those attacks, and their incredible ruthlessness — seeing the dismembered bodies of children spread over the streets — created in Israelis an impression of war," said Yaron Ezrahi, a political philosopher. "That trauma has remained a very powerful experience."

The explosions also created a new political dynamic, mainly to the benefit of Netanyahu. A candidate for prime minister at the time of the 1996 bombings, he rode into office playing the security card. Since then he has wasted no opportunity to bash the Palestinian Authority on terror, even as the incidence and casualties of terror have declined. "He can still rely on this memory and trauma, and he invokes it every time he negotiates," Ezrahi said.

The goal is to show that while terror may have abated lately, the Palestinians still have a basic strategy of wiping Israel off the map, government officials say. That sort of rhetoric leads some Palestinians to suspect the Israeli government would actually welcome a surge in violence.

"I believe Netanyahu dreams of a suicide attack in order to shed all his responsibilities under the peace process," said Mohammed Dahlan, the Palestinian security chief. "It would lift the U.S. pressure on him, and he'd be able to say to the world, 'You see?' But we're denying him the pleasure."

Moderate Croats Keep Low Profile

R. Jeffrey Smith in Mostar

THE campaign headquarters here of the New Croat Initiative political party was closed last Saturday, even while tens of thousands of voters from around the country cast their votes on the first day of this country's second election for a three-person presidency and a national parliament.

A moderate, generally pro-Western organization situated in a hotbed of nationalist Croat sentiment, the party has to keep an exceptionally low public profile. No markings adorn the headquarters building because "it would be dangerous," said Radoslav Dodig, the party's local chairman. "Most people don't know where it is."

Such are the challenges of providing an alternative to the ruling Bosnian Croat political party, the Democratic Union, which is led by ethnic separatists and has long had a stranglehold on political and economic life in Croat-held portions of Bosnia.

But nearly two years after signing the Dayton peace accord to end a bitter war and promote a multiethnic nation here, Western officials have hailed the emergence of the New Croat Initiative in Bosnia as a sign of nascent political pluralism and growing support for the peace accord. "For the first time, a group of respected Croats are calling the ruling Croat party corrupt and incompetent," said one such official.

Yet most Westerners here predict that the party's leader and presidential candidate, Kresimir Zubak — who was formerly a member of the ruling party but broke from it in May — will suffer a resounding defeat in the election, and some say that his party's future prospects are unclear.

One reason is what Dodig and other Croats, along with top Western officials, describe as a relentless campaign of intimidation by the ruling party.

Many of New Croat Initiative's candidates have been harassed, their roadside posters have been defaced and party workers have been threatened with the loss of their jobs or pensions. Its spokesmen have also been denied access to broadcast media that play a key role in political dialogue here.

But many Western officials concede that the new party's problems run far deeper than official intimidation. Of the three ethnic groups here, Croats are probably the most angry about the Dayton accord's provisions and the most defiant about its implementation.

"The Croats are the biggest problem . . . [because] they are lacking a sense of territory and identity," said Jacques Klein, a U.S. diplomat who is the principal deputy high representative of Western powers here. "They see themselves as infants in a crib, and believe the international community is trying to suffocate them before they can grow."

NOAM CHOMSKY ON THE FALL OF AN AMERICAN PUPPET – Page 3

LE MONDE diplomatique
The Guardian Weekly
September 1998

Taking a stand

WE ARE delighted to welcome readers of *The Guardian Weekly* into the family of people who are regular readers of *Le Monde diplomatique*. For us, the editorial directions taken by *The Guardian* in recent years have been exemplary — a model of journalism engaged in the service of democracy.

Our desire to broaden the readership of *Le Monde diplomatique* beyond the confines of France is not a recent thing. Already one third of total sales of our French-language edition are to readers overseas. From the start, we have been not a French newspaper that happens to sell abroad, but an international paper that happens to be based in France. Not only does our newspaper offer broad coverage of major world developments, but we also open our pages to intellectuals, experts, journalists, writers and public figures from all around the world. This has been a major contributing factor in our success.

Le Monde diplomatique is in excellent health. Over the past 10 years our circulation has doubled — rising from 135,000 copies at the end of 1987 to 270,000 by late 1997. Our readers tend to be young — 81% of them are under 49 and 41% under 34. We were the first paper in France to have its own site on the Internet, and visits to our French-language site are now approaching 200,000 per week.

This growth in our readership has made it possible for us to take a major step towards gaining our independence. Until 1996 our monthly was wholly owned by *Le Monde* newspaper. But a partial buy-out means that 40% of *Le Monde diplomatique's* capital (along with a right of veto) is now owned by the paper's journalists (through the Gunter Holzmann Association) and by our readers, represented by the association of The Friends of *Le Monde diplomatique*.

Newspapers today are going through a bad patch. So what we have achieved is good news for all who care about freedom of expression, and who want to see that freedom operating in the interests of reliable reporting, a concern for justice and an ethic of solidarity.

News is still a fundamental part of the healthy functioning of society. Democracy is an impossibility without a good communications network. It is information that helps the human race to live as free beings. Few people would take issue with that.

Today more and more people are sceptical and mistrustful of the media. There is a confused feeling that something is wrong in the general functioning of our news and information systems. Lies and mystification have been the standard fare for too many years, and people are increasingly appalled at what they are fed.

This lack of trust is based on a belief that our systems of news are not trustworthy, that they are somehow malfunctioning, that they are shot through with incompetence, and that sometimes they present blatant lies as if they were the truth. Naturally, people are worried.

We believe that we are at a turning point in the business of providing news. Our readers are proof of this: they demand greater rigour, more seriousness and greater reliability. They also want guidance on how to act to achieve real solutions to some of the world's problems.

Our readers appreciate us because we are serious about our journalism. They like the fact that we dig deeply into issues of economics, sociology, politics, science, technology, ecology, culture and ideology. They want to understand the complexities of the global economy, and what it means for the world in which we live. They want to know about new problems emerging in our societies, about the strategies of the world's major powers, and about the new kinds of conflicts that are shaking the world's major regions.

This is the logic underlying our efforts in the past few years to build foreign-language editions and partnerships with newspapers outside France. *Le Monde diplomatique* is now published on a monthly basis in seven different national editions: in Italy with *Il Manifesto;* in Germany with *Tageszeitung;* in Switzerland with *WochenZeitung;* in Spain with the publisher L-Press; in Mexico with *Editorial Sans Frontières;* in Greece with the daily *Eleftherotypia;* and in the Arab world with the Beirut daily *An-Nahar*. The newspaper is also available on the Internet in a Japanese version published out of Tokyo. In addition, our bimonthly magazine *Manière de Voir* is published in both Greek and Portuguese. A printed English edition is long overdue to complement the existing Internet and e-mail editions.

This is a major project. We believe it promises well for the future. And within this continuing activity we attach the greatest importance to the success of our collaboration with *The Guardian Weekly*.

IGNACIO RAMONET
Director of Le Monde diplomatique

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



STERN TEST FOR NEO-LIBERALISM

Will the world catch Asian flu?

BY FRANÇOIS CHESNAIS

ONLY a little over a year ago the devaluation of the Thai and Indonesian currencies opened the floodgates of a full-blown economic and financial crisis. By January 1998 one of the three pillars of the global economy had been severely battered, having served for 10 years as a showcase for the new "liberalised" and "deregulated" model of the capitalist economy and also, more importantly, as an escape route for the excess capital of the OECD member countries. However hard the free-marketeers have tried to deny it, from the collapse of South Korea onwards, it was no longer an "Asian crisis" but rather the first episode of a process leading towards world financial crisis and global depression (1).

In Asia, the crisis has already led to the closure of hundreds of factories. But more significantly, it has also led to the collapse of the social bases and institutional mechanisms of economic activity. In Indonesia and Thailand, tens of millions of people are once more suffering from extreme poverty. South Korea is experiencing a strong social backlash, as is Japan (2), now that Asia is passing from recession to depression.

The term "recession" can legitimately be used when the economic and social fabric of a country remains intact. In such cases cyclical recovery can be achieved by a revival in private consumption and investment or state-run recovery programmes. Recession turns to depression when falls in the level of production and trade become cumulative, to the point where the social foundations of economic activity are themselves affected. At this stage, it becomes impossible to see how the downward movement can be reversed: classic recovery measures become difficult or even useless. Depression is associated with a collapse of a country's institutions and economic activity. Many Asian countries have reached this stage, putting the whole region under threat.

The sharp contraction in banking and the drop in public spending which followed the collapse of markets and financial systems as a result of the devaluation of the Thai baht and Indonesian rupiah, and the subsequent devaluation of other currencies in the region, at first sight suggest similarities with what happened after the devaluation of the Mexican peso at the start of Mexico's crisis in 1994-95 (3).

But the Asian crisis has had its own special features: the largely private character of foreign debt held by international banks; Japan's inability to play the role of lender of last resort, unlike the United States in the case of Mexico; the onset of crisis in both South Korea and Japan, which are major exporters but also the primary customers for their neighbours' goods.

A key factor in the transition to depression is the tight interdependence of countries whose economies have all been built on the model of "export-led growth" (4) and thus need other countries as outlets. In 1997 more than 50% of the trade of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, but also of China, was intra-regional, and about half of that was with Japan. The percentage is a bit lower in the case of South Korea, but Korea's exports are of a qualitatively higher level. The productive capacities of the Korean conglomerates (*chaebol*) were created in the expecta-

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Holy war

EDITORIAL BY ALAIN GRESH

SELF-DEFENCE. That's the principle invoked by the Unites States to justify attacking "terrorist training camps" in Afghanistan and a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. In an international system in which states are challenging the law of the jungle, the State Department needed a legal cover for the bombings on 20 August 1998 which violated the sovereignty of several states. So it invoked Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. But the article only provides for the use of "self-defence" in the case of "an armed attack — until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security". Did the US really defend itself from "an armed attack" while waiting for the Security Council to take the "necessary measures"?

It seems not. Indeed, a number of American officials have pointed out that last month's raids marked a turning point in Washington's strategy: the US no longer feels constrained to seek an international consensus or the backing of the UN. As one official remarked, "We're in the deterrence business — [and it] is not based on legal niceties or delay" (1). Forget international law.

Anyway, international law was not much help when there was no sure proof of Osama bin Laden's involvement in the criminal attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. But, while FBI chief Louis Freeh was telling the world that "We are still in a fairly preliminary stage" of the inquiry, and his most senior colleague in the field was admitting that the main suspect arrested had neither confessed nor implicated Mr Bin Laden (2), the Tomahawks were already on their way.

People in the Muslim world are getting tired of this arrogance. Some of them think President Clinton was trying to turn attention from the Lewinsky affair; others say "a terrorist reaction to a terrorist action is unacceptable" (3). The most moderate think a military response has its limitations. As an Egyptian editorial put it, "All the Pentagon's power may help in fighting terrorism, but it will never be fully effective as long as discontent and [the Islamic world's] will to resist persist. A better approach would be policy shifts in favour of the oppressed, such as the Palestinians." (4) This is reminiscent of something said by Robert M. Gates, head of the CIA under the Bush administration: "We can pursue policies and strategies that in the long term weaken terrorism's roots. We can pursue a peace in the Middle East that does not kowtow to Binyamin Netanyahu's obstructionism." (5)

Osama bin Laden is now America's public enemy No1. Could the former "freedom fighter" have dreamed of a better role? Thousands of young Muslims will now find a reason for joining his "holy war". But others will be reduced to silence for fear of being accused of complicity with a power that helps perpetuate an unjust world order.

Willy-nilly the United States is locking itself into a "war of civilisations" and helping to widen the fracture between the Muslim world and the West. But the old order is on its way out. In a few years, the Middle East will have lost its main leaders. Yasser Arafat and Kings Hussein and Fahd are ill, as is President Hafez al Assad. There is a particularly dangerous transition ahead. Like anywhere else, the peoples of this region want peace, freedom, national independence, democracy. It is by responding to those desires, not launching a holy war against "Islamic terror", that we can guarantee an orderly transition.

Translated by Wendy Kristianasen

(1) *International Herald Tribune*, Paris, 24 August 1998.
(2) "US Seeks Proof on Saudi's Role", *International Herald Tribune*, 22-23 August 1998.
(3) Al Shark, Qatar, quoted by *Mideast Mirror*, London, 21 August 1998.
(4) *Al Ahram Weekly*, Cairo, 13-19 August 1998.
(5) "No Easy Remedies Against Anti-American Terrorism", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 August 1998.

STOPPING THE SPREAD OF CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

The spectre of bioterrorism

The bombing of the United States' embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the attack in Northern Ireland, the acts of the Aum Shinrikyo sect in Japan all point to the diversity of today's terrorist groups and the difficulties of dealing with them. There is no magic formula. But even if strong action is obviously called for, it is clear that the roots of terrorism need to be eradicated. The post-cold war world appears to be a more dangerous place than it was in the days of the old superpower confrontation. And if the various terrorist groups now move from conventional weapons to chemical and biological ones, the world will have even greater cause for alarm.

BY GILBERT ACHCAR



On 23 March this year, a United Kingdom government spokesman announced that the UK customs authorities had been placed on alert following reports of an Iraqi attempt to smuggle anthrax into the country in bottles intended for the duty-free trade. A few weeks earlier, the prime minister, Tony Blair, had himself raised the spectre of biological warfare in a House of Commons debate during the crisis with Baghdad in January and February.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States media were carrying reports that two men suspected of carrying quantities of anthrax bacillus in the boot of their car had been arrested by the FBI in Las Vegas on 19 February. It appeared that one of the men, a former extreme-right militant and specialist in biological weapons, had been found guilty of misappropriating phials of bubonic plague germs in 1995. This time, however, it turned out that the suspect substance was only an anti-anthrax vaccine for veterinary use.

But the story had broken at just the right time for the Clinton Administration, with the deadline for a possible military strike against Iraq fast approaching and US public opinion increasingly alarmed at the prospect.

According to *Newsweek* (1), the bioterrorist argument was first used by the Pentagon to persuade the president of the need to act. The decision is reported to have been taken at a National Security Council meeting in November 1997 after US Defence Secretary William Cohen had alerted the president to the danger of Baghdad holding stocks of biological weapons.

This suspicion had been raised by inspectors from UNSCOM, the UN special commission responsible for overseeing the disarmament of Iraq, whose disagreement with the Iraqi authorities had caused the crisis. The defence secretary explained that five pounds (2.27kg) of *Bacillus anthracis* spores would be enough to wipe out the entire population of the US. The president was impressed and asked him to repeat the statement in public.

Mr Cohen gave a dramatic demonstration on the popular American TV show, "This Week with Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts". Producing a five-pound bag of sugar, he repeated his apocalyptic warning, a warning echoed immediately afterwards by the president in equally dramatic terms, telling the nation and the world that the crisis with Iraq was about "the security of the 21st century". A few days after his television appearance, the defence secretary went even further, earning himself the title of Dr Doom by stating at a press conference that Iraq had enough VX nerve gas "to kill every man, woman and child on the face of the earth" (2).

Of course, Mr Cohen omitted to mention that Iraq had originally got its chemical and biological weapons from the West in the course of its war against Iran and the Iraqi Kurds (3) and that the Western powers had had very little to say when the Iraqi government repeatedly used its chemical weapons against both these targets (4). And should we not also ask why it is considered less worrying for countries such as Israel and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to have weapons of mass destruction?

But apart from these double standards, which are, after all, the common currency of international relations, the US defence secretary's statements were grossly exaggerated. To take chemical weapons first, the claim that Iraq has enough VX to wipe out the entire population of the world is quite unrealistic. The lethal dose of VX is 0.4 milligrams, so it would take more than 2,000 tonnes to destroy the human race, even supposing the same minimum dose was administered to each and every one. UNSCOM says it has lost track of stocks amounting to one-tenth of that figure. The ravages caused by the dissemination of 200 tonnes of VX would be terrifying enough. So why did Mr Cohen feel the need to exaggerate so much, if not to poison people's minds for political purposes?

It is even less plausible to claim that five pounds of *Bacillus anthracis* would be enough to wipe out the entire population of the US. If that were indeed the case, it would mean that the Americans are as ill-equipped to deal with such a scourge as the American Indians were to cope with the microbes the conquistadors brought with them from Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.

But quite apart from the defence secretary's deliberate exaggeration, the fact is that a bioterrorist attack is far more likely and far more frightening than an airborne chemical attack on the US and its allies or their armed forces. The reason lies in the difference between these two sorts of weapons. The disabling or fatal effects of chemical weapons are instantaneous, or at any rate much quicker than those of biological weapons, so they are much more useful in battle. The production and use of such weapons on a massive scale presupposes a minimum of sophisticated means more likely to be available to an army than to terrorist groups. However, armies can protect themselves in advance against chemical weapons by using masks, preventive medication, antidotes and so on.

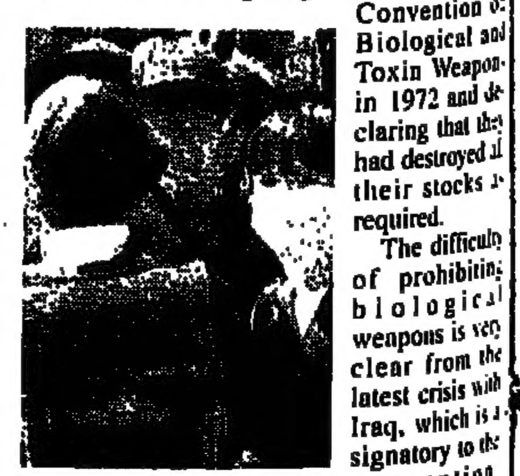
Biological weapons, on the other hand, are much deadlier weight for weight. In the case of one of the most virulent, botulin (the toxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum* which causes botulism) the quantities required are infinitesimal. The lethal dose of this toxin is 15,000 times less than that of VX, which itself is far less than that of the nerve gas, sarin. Biological weapons have the further advantage of being living micro-organisms and are thus the only weapons that can proliferate without assistance once they are released into a suitable environment. In fact, this proliferation can actually be accelerated by genetic manipulation. And these weapons are easy to produce, often only requiring a rudimentary laboratory in a bathroom.

Disseminating these biological substances does not call for sophisticated devices or miracles of ingenuity, either. They work through inhalation or ingestion and can easily be spread by crop-spraying equipment in the open or by aerosol sprays in a confined space. Alternatively, they can sometimes be introduced into the drinking water supply or the food chain. Biological weapons are thus invisible — weapons of stealth in the fullest sense of the word. They can be carried undetected across borders, either in small initial cultures or in sufficient quantities already enough for a full-scale massacre.

As a result, the biological threat is taken very seriously indeed in the Pentagon. In a recent collection of studies of 21st century warfare (5), Robert Kadlec, a US Air Force medical officer, wrote that, under favourable meteorological conditions, 100kg of anthrax bacillus dropped by night on a city the size of Washington would cover an area of 300 square kilometres and could kill between one and three million people — "as many people as a comparably-sized nuclear device". So biological weapons may well be the "poor man's nuke".

Lieutenant-Colonel Kadlec quotes the head of the US Army Chemical and Biological Defence Agency (CBDA) as considering the biological threat the only one still capable of "disastrous effects on forces deployed in a theatre of operations". Which is no doubt why a number of states in the world's two main areas of tension are thought to possess this biological potential. In the Middle East, they are Iraq, Iran, Israel, Libya and Syria, and in the Far East, China, North Korea and Taiwan.

The two cold war superpowers themselves built up and developed considerable arsenals of biological weapons during the 1950s and 1960s before signing the International Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons in 1972 and declaring that they had destroyed all their stocks as required.



The difficulty of prohibiting biological weapons is very clear from the latest crisis with Iraq, which is a signatory to the convention. These weapons are so easy to produce that international inspection cannot possibly be as effective as the inspection that ensures the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons by signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Regular inspections would have to be carried out, covering not only each country's military facilities, but also all its chemical, pharmaceutical and food factories, and every nook and cranny of its "presidential sites" and government buildings – in short, an UNSCOM for every state that signed the convention.

As long as these weapons are treated as a "poor man's nuke", that is, as a deterrent, the

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THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF COMPLICITY

Indonesia, master card in Washington's hand

The crisis that started in Southeast Asia has now spread well beyond the confines of Asia. Its first victim — apart from the millions of workers now unemployed — was Indonesia's General Suharto. President for over 30 years, his monopoly of power was based on emoluments and corruption. Unable to carry out the reforms demanded by the IMF or to stop the riots, he was forced to resign on 21 May. His successor, B. J. Habibie, has promised elections, the release of political prisoners and changes at the top of the army. However, Indonesia, reduced to a poor country in just a few months, is in need of greater change.

BY NOAM CHOMSKY

ON MAY 20, 1998 United States Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, called upon Indonesia's President Suharto to resign and provide for "a democratic transition". A few hours later, Mr Suharto transferred formal authority to his hand-picked vice-president. The two events were not simple cause and effect. They do, however, give some indication of the nature of the relations that have evolved over half a century.

Four months earlier, an Australian publication had reported that while "IMF Director Michel Camdessus stood over Suharto with his arms folded in true colonial style, Suharto signed a new IMF agreement". The photo showing the humbling of Suharto was plastered across the local papers the next day (1). Whatever the circumstances, the symbolism was not missed. Mr Suharto's rule relied crucially on US support. He has been a favourite of Western governments and investors since he took power in 1965. To sustain his power and violence, the White House has repeatedly evaded congressional restrictions on military aid and training: Jimmy Carter in 1978, Bill Clinton in 1993 and 1998. The Clinton Administration also suspended review of Indonesia's appalling labour practices while praising Jakarta for bringing them "into closer conformity with international standards".

Mr Suharto's recent fall from grace follows a familiar course: Mobutu, Saddam Hussein, Duvalier, Marcos, Somoza, etc. The usual reasons are disobedience or loss of control. In Suharto's case, both factors operated: his failure to follow IMF orders that were subjecting the population to cruel punishment, then his inability to subdue popular opposition, which made it clear that his usefulness was at an end.

After the second world war, Indonesia had a prominent place in US efforts to construct an international political and economic order. Planning was careful and sophisticated; each region was assigned its proper role. The "main function" of Southeast Asia was to provide resources and raw materials to the industrial societies. Indonesia was the richest prize. In 1948 the influential planner George Kennan described "the problem of Indonesia" as "the most crucial issue of the moment in our struggle with the Kremlin" — that is, the struggle against independent nationalism, whatever the Kremlin role might be (in this case, very slight).

Kennan warned that a "communist" Indonesia would be an "infection" that "would sweep westward" through all of South Asia. The term "communism" is routinely used to cover any form of independent nationalism, and it is understood that "infections" spread not by conquest but by example.

"The problem of Indonesia" persisted. In 1958 US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, informed the National Security Council that Indonesia was one of three major world crises, along with Algeria and the Middle East. He emphasised that there was no Soviet role in any of these cases, with the "vociferous" agreement of President Eisenhower. The main problem in Indonesia was the Communist party (PKI), which was winning "widespread support not as a revolutionary party but as an organisation defending the interests of the poor within the existing system," developing a "mass base among the peasantry" through its "vigor in defending the interests of the . . . poor" (2). The US embassy in Jakarta reported that it might not be possible to overcome the PKI "by ordinary democratic means", so that "elimination" by police and military might be undertaken. The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged that "action must be taken, including overt measures as required, to ensure either the success of the dissidents or the suppression of the pro-communist elements of the Sukarno government".

The "dissidents" were the leaders of a rebellion in the outer islands, the site of most of Indonesia's oil and US investments. US support for the secessionist movement was "by far the largest, and to this day the least known, of the Eisenhower administration's covert militarised interventions," two leading Southeast Asia specialists conclude in a revealing study (3). When the rebellion collapsed, after bringing down the last residue of parliamentary institutions, the US turned to other means to "eliminate" the country's major political force.

That goal was achieved when Suharto took power in 1965, with Washington's strong support and assistance. Army-led massacres wiped out the PKI and devastated its mass base in "one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century," comparable to the atrocities of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, the CIA reported, judging "the Indonesian coup" to be "certainly one of the most significant events of the 20th century" (4). Perhaps half a million or more were killed within a few months.

The events were greeted with undisguised euphoria. The New York Times described the "staggering mass slaughter" as "a gleam of light in Asia," praising Washington for keeping its own role quiet so as not to embarrass the "Indonesian moderates" who were cleansing their society, then rewarding them with generous aid (5). Time praised the "quietly determined" leader Suharto with his "scrupulously constitutional" procedures "based on law, not on mere power" as he presided over a "boiling bloodbath" that was "the West's best news for years in Asia" (6).

The reaction was near-uniform. The World Bank restored Indonesia to favour. Western governments and corporations flocked to Suharto's "paradise for investors", impeded only by the rapacity of the ruling family. For more than 20 years, Suharto was hailed as a "moderate" who is "at heart benign" (The Economist) as he compiled a record of slaughter, terror, and corruption that has few counterparts in post-war history.

Suharto is also hailed for his economic achievements. An Australian specialist who participated in economic modelling in Indonesia dismisses the standard figures as "seriously inaccurate": the regularly reported 7% growth rate, for example, was invented on government orders, overruling the assessment of the economists (7). He confirms that economic growth took place, thanks to Indonesia's oil reserves and the green revolution, "the benefits of which even the massive inefficiency of the system of corruption could not entirely erode". The benefits were enhanced by extraction of other resources and the supply of super-cheap labour, kept that way by the labour standards that impress Washington. Much of the rest is "a mirage", as was quickly revealed when "foreign investors stampeded".

The estimated $80 billion private debt is held by at most a few hundred individuals, Indonesian economists estimate, perhaps as few as 50. The wealth of the Suharto family is estimated at roughly the scale of the IMF rescue package. The estimates suggest simple ways to overcome the "financial crisis", but these are not on the agenda. The costs are to be borne primarily by 200 million Indonesians who borrowed nothing, along with Western taxpayers, in accord with the rules of "really existing capitalism".

Oil reserves

IN 1975, the Indonesian army invaded East Timor, then being taken over by its own population after the collapse of the Portuguese empire (8). The US and Australia, at least, knew that the invasion was coming and approved it. Australian Ambassador Richard Woolcott urged his government to follow the "pragmatic" course of "Kissingerian realism", (Kissinger was then secretary of state in the Ford Administration). This was for one reason, because Australia might be able to make a better deal on Timor's oil reserves with Indonesia "than with Portugal or independent Portuguese Timor".

The Indonesian army relied on the US for 90% of its arms, which were restricted to use in "self-defence." The rules were followed in accord with that same "Kissingerian realism" and scant attention was paid to the restriction. Adhering to the same doctrine, Washington immediately stepped up the flow of arms while declaring an arms suspension.

The UN Security Council ordered Indonesia to withdraw, but that was an empty gesture. As UN Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan explained in his memoirs, he followed the directives of the State Department to render the UN "utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook" because "the United States wished things to turn out as they did" and "worked to bring this about". He also described how "things turned out", noting that within a few months 60,000 Timorese had been killed, "almost the proportion of casualties experienced by the Soviet Union during the second world war".

The massacre continued, peaking in 1978 with the help of new arms provided by the Carter Administration. The toll is estimated at about 200,000, the worst slaughter relative to population since the holocaust. By 1978 the US was joined by Britain, France, and others eager to gain what they could from the slaughter. Under the presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the French Foreign Minister, Louis de Guiringaud, visited Jakarta to arrange for the sale of French arms, judging his visit to have been "satisfying in all respects" and adding that France would not "embarrass" Indonesia in international forums (9). Protest in the West was minuscule; little was even reported.

Atrocities continue to the present with the decisive support of the US and its allies, though popular protest has increased, within Indonesia as well, where courageous dissidents, also unreported, have been calling on the West to live up to its fine words. To bring this horror to an end requires no bombing, sanctions or other drastic means: simple unwillingness to participate might well have sufficed. But that was never considered an option. The implications remain unexamined, dismissed in favour of ritual and irrelevant appeals to the cold war.

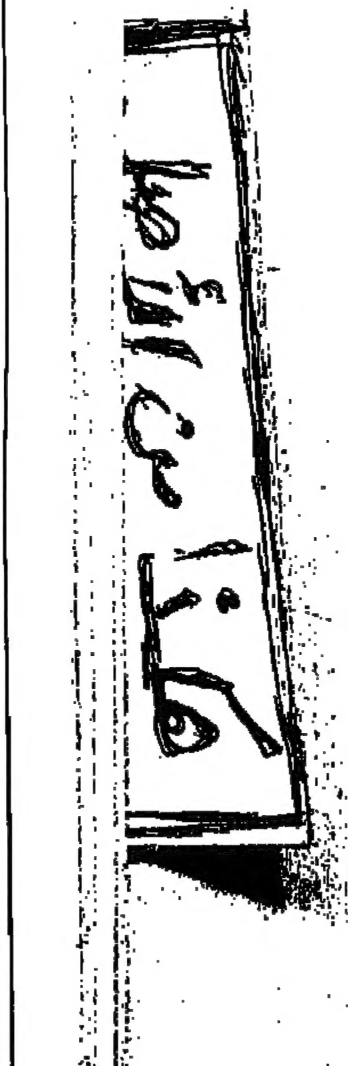
In 1989 Australia signed a treaty with Indonesia to exploit the oil of "the Indonesian Province of East Timor" — which sober realists tell us is not economically viable and therefore cannot be granted the right of self-determination affirmed by the Security Council and the World Court. The treaty was put into effect immediately after the army massacred several hundred more Timorese at a graveyard commemoration of a recent army assassination. Western oil companies joined in the robbery, eliciting no comment.

So matters continued until General Suharto made his first mistakes.

Original text in English

(1) *Inside Indonesia* (Australia), April/June 1998, and *Business Week*, 1 June 1998.
(2) Harold Crouch, *Army and Politics in Indonesia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1978.
(3) Audrey and George Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, New Press, New York, 1995.
(4) CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, "Intelligence report column, Indonesia, 1965, the coup that backfired", Washington, 1968.
(5) *New York Times*, 22 December 1965, 17 February 1966 and 19 June 1966.
(6) *Time*, 15 July 1966.
(7) *Australian Financial Review*, 18 March 1998.
(8) See Noam Chomsky, *Power and Prospects, Reflexions on Human Nature and the Social Order*, chapters 7 and 8, Pluto Press, London, 1996.
(9) See Roland-Pierre Paringaux, *Le Monde*, 14 September 1978.

Noam Chomsky is professor at Massachussetts Institute of Technology



CRIMINAL NETWORKS ENJOY OFFICIAL PROTECTION

Turkey's pivotal role in the world drugs trade

With last month's appointment of a new chief of staff, Husseyin Kirikoglu, Turkey's powerful generals are now discussing ways of dismantling the country's notorious mafia networks. This was made all the more urgent by the 17 August arrest of mafia boss Alaattin Çakici in Nice. Çakici, who had escaped from a Swiss prison, was in possession of a Turkish diplomatic passport and claimed to be working for the Turkish intelligence services. Turkey is currently seeking his extradition. However, with the growing state sponsorship of organised crime, any real attempt to clean up a corrupt system remains in doubt.

BY KENDAL NEZAN

THE attempted murder on 12 May this year of Akin Birdal, president of the Turkish Human Rights Association, has reopened the debate on the activities of the criminal networks that have flourished under the protection of the Turkish authorities. The attempt took place in Ankara a few weeks after a speech Mr Birdal made before a hearing of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), of which he is vice-president, that drew wide public attention to what is going on in Turkey. "In Spain, the 28 murders committed by the GAL have become a matter of concern at the highest government level," protested Mr Birdal, "whereas in Turkey, which likes to present itself as a law-abiding state and which is seeking admission to the European Union, not one single perpetrator of more than 4,500 unsolved murders carried out since 1991 [the faili mesul cinayetleri] has so far been arrested. In my country, the murderers are on the streets and the intellectuals are behind bars."

In a report published on 28 January 1997, the Turkish government's chief inspector, Kutlu Savas, described how, in the juridical noman's land of Kurdish Southeast Turkey, the army's "special war units" were not just killing with impunity, but were also involved in protection rackets, blackmail, rape and drug trafficking (1). The report also describes how the Turkish government handed over the security of a huge area – around the towns of Siverek and Hilvan – to the private army of tribal chief Sedat Bucak, a member of parliament close to the former prime minister, Tansu Çiller.

In an incident which had major repercussions, this warlord politician was the sole survivor of a road accident in November 1996 near Susurluk. Mr Bucak had been travelling with a chief of police and a well-known far-right mafia boss, Abdullah Çatli, who had been implicated in the attempted assassination of the Pope and was wanted both by Interpol for drug trafficking and by the Turkish state for the murder of seven leftwing militants.

For the people of Turkey, the Susurluk affair and its sinister associations has become synonymous with the Turkish state's slide into mafia activities. It has prompted repeated calls for a clean-up in the upper echelons of the state. The public outcry has not been satisfied by the setting up of a parliamentary commission, nor by Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's comments on its report in a TV appearance on 23 January 1997. These are just seen as attempts to cover up the extent of the gangrene eating at the very heart of the state, particularly since the political and police figures under suspicion are still very much at large and claiming that they acted on orders from high-up in the state apparatus (2).

State-sponsored killers

CHIEF inspector Savas accuses a man by the name of Yesil, known as "the Terminator", of responsibility for at least 19 killings, including that of a member of parliament, Mehmet Sincar. His report states that the Terminator, "acting in the full knowledge of the MIT [National Intelligence Organisation], one of whose chiefs he referred to as *baba* [father], was able to run a bank account in Ankara, through which huge sums of money passed deriving from protection rackets and drug trafficking". Carrying papers supplied by the prime minister's intelligence office, Yesil left Turkey on 23 October 1996 and headed for Beirut in the company of two MIT agents travelling on diplomatic passports.

Another police-sponsored serial killer, Ayhan Çarkin, was interrogated by the MIT on 28 August 1996. He said that he been "charged with being involved in 91 murders in East and Southeast Turkey. My interrogators have told me, 'We know about that and nobody's holding that against you. But why did you kidnap Omer Luftu Topal [the casino king]? On your own account? Don't you know you're serving a political master? Namely Prime Minister Tansu Çiller and Mehmet Agar [director-general of the national police].'"

Mrs Çiller's blustering statement back on 4 October 1993 has often been cited: "We know the list of businessmen and artists involved in racketeering with the PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party] and we shall be bringing them to account." Beginning on 14 January 1994, almost 100 people were individually picked up by commandos wearing uniforms and travelling in police vehicles and were then killed somewhere along the road from Ankara to Istanbul in the "satanic triangle" of Kocaeli (a fiefdom of the far-right mafia and a focal point for the trafficking of heroin into Europe).

The operative head of the special operations bureau, who has been directly implicated in these killings, was Abdullah Çatli. Çatli was close to the former prime minister, who paid him a fulsome tribute after his death in the Susurluk accident. He is reckoned to have been one of the main perpetrators of underground operations carried out by the Turkish branch of the Gladio organisation (3) and had played a key role in the bloody events of the period 1976-80 which paved the way for the military coup of September 1980. (During that period, as head of the far-right Grey Wolves militia, he had been accused, among other things, of the murder of seven leftwing students).

Abdullah Çatli is accused of having organised the escape from prison and flight to Europe of Mehmet Ali Agca, the man held responsible for the murder of the editor of the liberal daily paper Milliyet. He was also reported to have organised the assassination attempt on the Pope at the request of Turkish mafia boss Bekir Celenk, in exchange for the sum of 3 million marks. He moved to France and there, under the name of Hasan Kurtoglu, resumed his services for the Turkish state, which put him in charge of a series of attacks on Asala, the Armenian liberation movement, and other Armenian interests. These included blowing up the Armenian monument at Alfortville on 3 May 1984 and the attempted murder of activist Ara Toronian.

The MIT paid him in heroin, and he was eventually arrested for drug trafficking in Paris on 25 October 1984. He was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, and in 1988 he was handed over to Switzerland, where he was also wanted on charges of drug dealing. Despite a fresh seven-year sentence, he managed to escape in March 1990 and returned to Turkey, where he was then recruited by the police for "special missions". This at a time when he was officially being sought by the Turkish authorities for murder and faced a possible death penalty.

Çatli, described by Mrs Çiller as a "great patriot", was a terrible man with a dreadful record of atrocities to his name. For example, he would demand money from people on Mrs Çiller's "list", promising to get their names removed, and then pocket the money and have them kidnapped and killed. One of his victims, Behcet Canturk, was to pay $10 million, to which "Casino King" Omer Luftu Topal added a further $17 million. This double ransom did not stop Canturk from being kidnapped on 28 July 1996 by police officers under Çatli's orders. The officers were recognised by a witness and reported to the Istanbul police on 25 August 1996. They were arrested and briefly held in Istanbul on 27 August, then promptly transferred by night to Ankara on the personal orders of the minister of interior. In order to cover for them, the minister placed them under the close protection of Sedat Bucak, a member of parliament and a key figure in Mrs Çiller's "special organisation". The witness who so rashly reported the proceedings was eliminated on 28 August.

The costs of the "special war" have been high. In 1993 a sum of $70 million was allocated from the prime minister's secret funds. According to Inspector Savas, this sum was used mainly for buying weapons and anti-terrorist equipment from Israel and for external operations. On the home front, racketeering and secret funding made it possible to maintain an array of hired killers and informers. However, the cost of maintaining private armies such as Sedat Bucak's (20,000 men) as well as the 64,000 "village guards" (pro-government Kurdish militias) made it necessary to find more funding. So Turkey's state-owned banks were mobilised to provide generous credit facilities for government supporters in the regions. But the main source of funding has been the trafficking of heroin on a massive scale.

From oil to drugs

SINCE the 1950s Turkey has played a key role in channelling into Europe and the United States heroin produced in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The operation is run by mafia groups closely controlled by the MIT. One of their personnel described their relations with the police in the following terms: "Our people are able to pass through Yesilköy [Istanbul] airport whenever they wish, without being controlled by customs, with briefcases containing 3-5 million marks. Sometimes they stamp their passports, sometimes they don't. Our boss has got all kinds of false passports, stamps etc." (4).

After the Gulf war in 1991, Turkey found itself deprived of the all-important Iraqi market. Since it lacked significant oil reserves of its own, it decided to make up for the loss by turning more massively to drugs. The trafficking increased in intensity with the arrival in power of the "hawks" after the death of President Turgut Özal in April 1993. According to the interior minister, the war in Kurdistan had cost the Turkish exchequer upwards of $12.5 billion (5), whereas, according to the daily Hürriyet, Turkey's heroin trafficking brought in $25 billion in 1995 and $37.5 billion in 1996 (6).

Only criminal networks working in close co-operation with the police and the army could possibly organise trafficking on such a scale. The traffickers themselves travel on diplomatic passports. According to witnesses at the parliamentary commission inquiring into the Susurluk accident, the drugs are even transported by military helicopter from the Iranian border. The president of the commission, Mehmet Erkalmis, has himself complained that these damning allegations have been censured out of the commission's official report.

In an explosive document made public by the editor of the weekly Aydinlik at a press conference in Istanbul on 21 September 1996, the MIT itself accused its rival organisation, Turkey's national police, of having "provided police identity cards and diplomatic passports to members of a group which, in the guise of anti-terrorist activities, travelled to Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary and Azerbaijan to engage in drug trafficking". It provided a list of names of some of the traffickers operating under the protection of the police. The police, via police chief Hanefi Avci, returned the compliment and handed over a list of named drug traffickers employed by the MIT. According to Inspector Savas's report, the intra-police war for control of this lucrative trade had thus far cost the lives of 15 MIT officers.

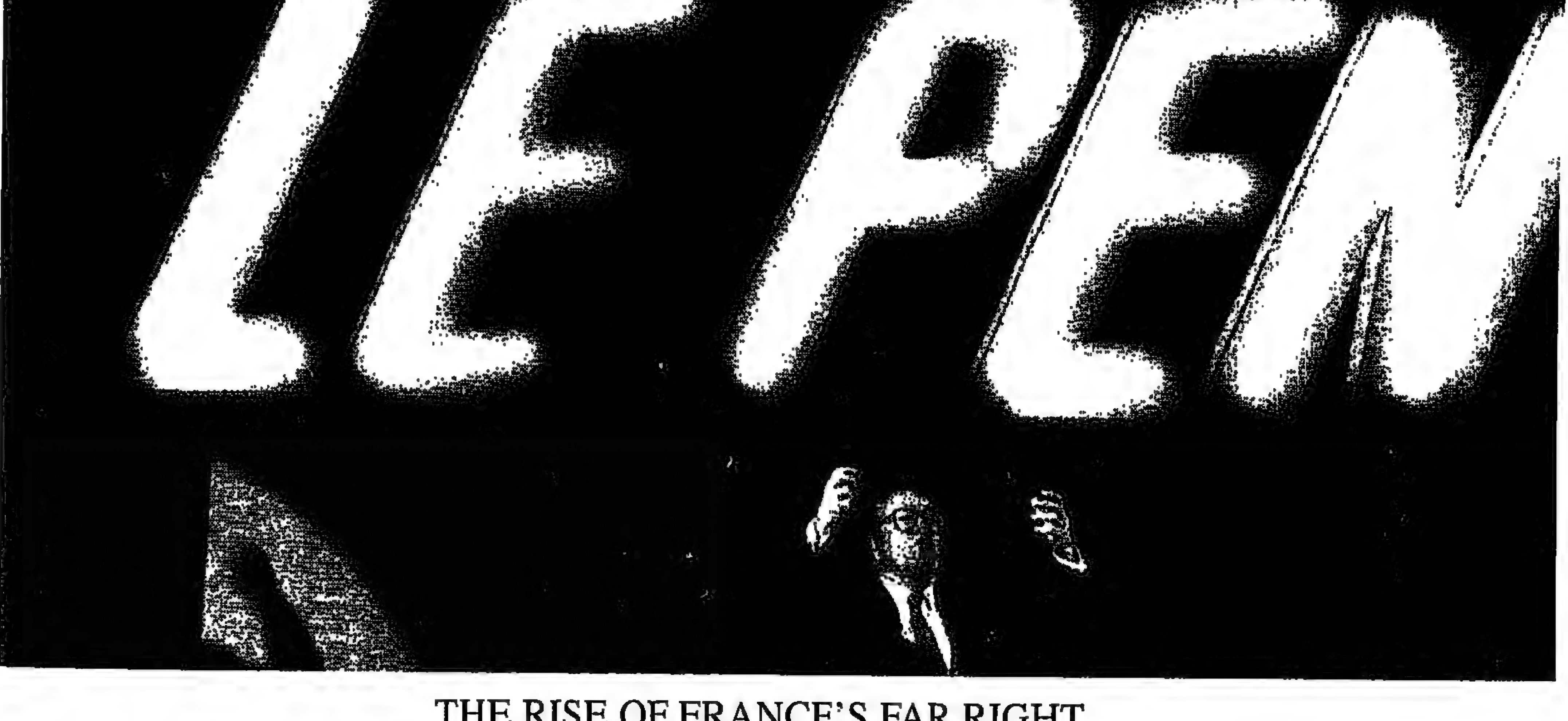
Western Europe is the principal target of this massive trafficking operation. However, most European governments prefer to maintain an embarrassed silence over Ankara's dealings, in the same way that they have refrained from open criticism of the destruction of 3,428 Kurdish villages and the displacement of more than 3 million Kurds by their Turkish allies (7). However, on 22 January 1997 a German judge, Ralf Schwalbe, launched public accusations against the Turkish government in general and Mrs Çiller in particular. These were taken up by Tom Sackville, a minister at the British Home Office, who stated in the *Sunday Times* on 26 January 1997 that 80% of the heroin seized in Britain came from Turkey and that his government was concerned at reports that members of the Turkish police, and even of the Turkish government, were involved in drug trafficking.

Prompted by these disclosures, on 17 June 1997 the head of the OECD's "Financial Task Force", Fernando Carpentieri, issued a solemn warning that Turkey was "the only member of the OECD not applying the measures decided by the OECD to prevent money laundering". The situation cannot be allowed to continue for much longer. We are giving the Turkish authorities until September to pass the necessary legislation. Otherwise the country could face a potentially destructive reaction from the world banking community."

Even Washington, Turkey's faithful ally, has begun to break its silence. The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) by the US State Department, published in February 1998, revealed that "about 75% of the heroin seized in Europe is either produced in, or derives from, Turkey", that "four to six tons of heroin arrive from there every month, heading for Western Europe" and that "a number of laboratories for the purification of the opium used in transforming the basic morphine into heroin are located on Turkish soil". The report also stresses that Turkey is one of the countries most affected by money-laundering, which takes places via the countries of the former Soviet Union in particular, through the medium of casinos, the construction industry and tourism.

(1) "In the region under State of Emergency [the Kurdish provinces], the authority to apply the death sentence has been brought down to the level of low-ranking officers and, even more seriously, to repentant prisoners, who were the terrorists of yesterday and are the potential criminals of tomorrow . . . When persons have been handed over from one state service to another, after a case has been has been adjourned in the courts, and are found dead under a bridge, it is obvious that one cannot speak of murders by unknown perpetrators." So writes Government Inspector Savas in his report, the expurgated text of which was published as a supplement by the Turkish daily *Radikal* on 4 February 1998.
(2) According to the Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, 6 June 1998, 43 police officers accused of involvement in these operations have been promoted.
(3) Gladio is an anti-communist resistance network set up by Nato in Western Europe after the second world war. It has been operating for 40 years.
(4) Soner Yalçin and Dogan Yurdakul, *Ries, Gladio'nun Türk Tetikçisi* (The Rais: Gladio's Turkish Killer), Oteki Yayinlari, Istanbul, October 1997.
(5) *Turkish Daily News*, 29 January 1995.
(6) *Hürriyet*, 26 December 1996 and 5 June 1997.
(7) Official figure provided by the Migration Commission of the Turkish parliament and quoted in *Turkish Probe*, 7 June 1998.

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THE RISE OF FRANCE'S FAR RIGHT

Holocaust denial is part of a strategy

BY VALERIE IGOUNET

HOLOCAUST denial is a convenient polemical substitute for anti-Semitism. There are some differences in the way the various strands of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front (FN) react to it, but, on the whole, the party takes a conciliatory line. Since its foundation it has gradually been incorporating the claims of holocaust deniers into its ideology. Recurrent references by FN leaders to the period of the second world war, slips of the tongue that are actually quite deliberate, and constant harping on the theme of "Jewish conspiracy", are part and parcel of a holocaust denial strategy. The various appeals to anti-Jewish feeling, reflecting a deliberate policy, are intended to give a battery of signals to the anti-Semitic electorate that already votes for the FN or is moving in that direction.

The FN accepted the denial of history from the outset. François Duprat, a card-carrying party member, was one of the main purveyors of holocaust denial claims in French and international far-right circles. In March 1978 he was killed by a car bomb. The FN's official newspaper, *Le National*, carried the funeral oration, which described him as an "historian" concerned with the "struggle for historical truth". It ended on the following note: "Know that you did not die in vain, for we shall take up the struggle. Your work will be continued!" (1) For 10 years Jean-Marie Le Pen accepted holocaust deniers in his party but said nothing in public.

In 1986 the FN ideologists revised their ideas about the potential media impact of holocaust denial. The Roques affair marked the first step. In an interview published in *National Hebdo*, Le Pen made his first public statement on the matter. He trod carefully, but avoided condemning Henri Roques for his denial that the gas chambers had existed. "This is not a matter for the administration or the courts," said Le Pen. "It is a purely a question of historical research . . . All reasonable people accept that Jews died en masse in the Nazi camps. What 'revisionist' historians are disputing is the method of extermination, i.e. the gas chambers, and the numbers involved, i.e. 6 million . . . These are matters for specialists and must be settled by historical methodology. In the case of the genocide of the Jews, I do not find it surprising that historians on both sides should, in all good faith, take time to put forward their figures." (2) By taking up the cherished themes of the holocaust deniers and referring to them as historians, Le Pen sought to make holocaust denial respectable.

A few months later Le Pen confirmed his party's commitment to holocaust denial. On 13 September 1987, as a guest in a panel discussion programme (Le Grand Jury RTL-Le Monde), he referred to the gas chambers as "a point of detail of the second world war". Protesting that he had not seen them with his own eyes nor made a special study of the question, he asked whether the existence of the gas chambers was "a revealed truth in which everyone had to believe". It was, he claimed, "a subject of debate among historians". Asked whether he was familiar with Mr Roques's ideas, Le Pen replied in the negative, although his comments on the subject had been reported in *National Hebdo* only a few months previously.

The "point of detail" was no slip of the tongue. It was a further step towards the incorporation of holocaust denial into FN ideology. The party's language became more radical, as the FN press began to denounce the "myth of the 6 million". The party's followers were apparently not shocked by this. Eight months later, Le Pen won 14.4% of the vote in the first round of the presidential election. That year, holocaust denial literature was again on sale at the party convention. A year later, at the FN's summer school, Le Pen indulged in a pun, "Durafour-crématoire", at the expense of the minister for the civil service, the last syllable of whose name means "oven". The clumsy reference to the gas chambers was not lost on the public. As in the case of his earlier "slip of the tongue", Le Pen was taken to court.

The media attention paid to the FN leader highlighted his obsession with the period 1939-45. Le Pen is out to mutilate holocaust history and confuse the issue of the Nazi occupation. His purpose is twofold. First, to rehabilitate the Vichy regime. Second, to deny the crimes committed by the Third Reich in order to establish it as a respectable reference, if not a model. The FN's anti-immigration focus should not blind us to the turn taken in 1989, when anti-Semitism became a regular feature of its propaganda. The first shot was fired by Le Pen himself, in an attack on the "Jewish International". The aim is to discredit the political authorities by accusations of "Jewish domination" and frequent use of terms like "government Jew" or "media Jew".

The FN is the only party whose platform includes a defence of the right to deny the holocaust. In July 1990 FN deputy Marie-France Stirbois was the sole member of the Assemblée Nationale to vote against the Gayssot Act, which made the denial of Nazi war crimes a criminal offence. She described it as a totalitarian attempt to establish official truths and give historical statements about the second world war the status of "official dogma" (3). Subsequently, the "50 proposals" put forward by the FN's national delegate and second-in-command, Bruno Mégret, included the repeal of "anti-freedom legislation".

Breaking down the last barriers

ON THE 20th anniversary of its foundation the FN confirmed this stance by incorporating in its platform "16 lines of action to implement the great alternative". The measures proposed are directly relevant to holocaust denial. They include "defence of the fundamental freedoms of teaching, research, enterprise, work and information" and the "guarantee of freedom of expression through the repeal of anti-freedom legislation" (4).

Speaking in Munich on 5 December 1997, Le Pen again described the gas chambers as a "point of detail". After this, some differences of opinion emerged within the FN as to how to the strategy should be pursued. Bruno Mégret, in particular, supported the "battle for freedom of vocabulary" but argued for greater moderation.

Apart from such slight differences of emphasis, the FN unanimously approved Le Pen's statement. Martin Peltier, editor of *National Hebdo*, admitted having received one or two disgruntled letters but emphasised the overall absence of disapproval within the party. The FN leaders were no longer concerned to trivialise holocaust denial. Their attempt to incorporate it in their electoral strategy had succeeded. Ten years ago, the "point of detail" had provoked resignations and public criticism from within the party. Today the ideological groundwork has been laid and the scene is set.

Martin Peltier wrote that, by repeating his remarks in Munich, Le Pen was simply "asserting loud and clear that no word shall remain taboo and that the task of nationalists is to reclaim historical and political vocabulary and to free public debate from the restrictions imposed by the language police" (5). According to him, the FN leader was out to "break down the last barriers preventing people from accepting FN ideology" (6). These barriers had their origin in "the manipulation of the history of the second world war", a manoeuvre wholly conceived and implemented by the victors to discredit the far right for all time by portraying it as guilty of an act of unprecedented barbarity, i.e. the alleged extermination of the Jews. The general disapproval of which the FN was the "victim" was simply the result of this manoeuvre. And the manoeuvre itself was based on a lie.

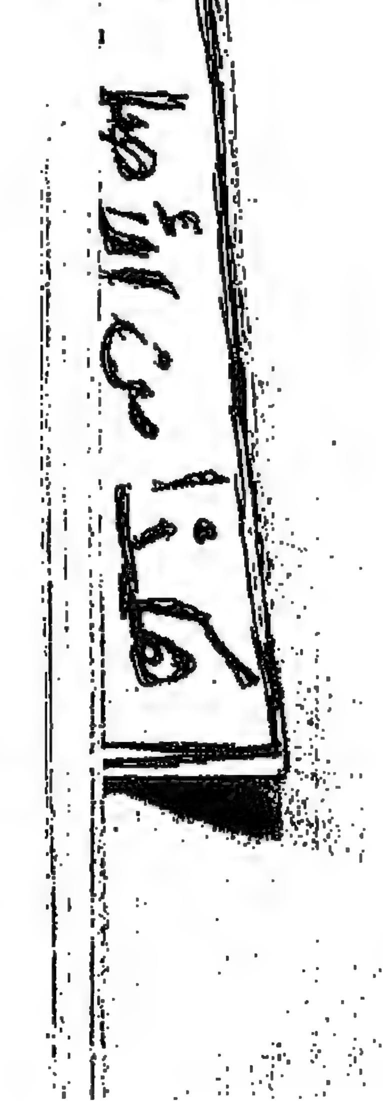
Peltier argued that the "battle for memory" might appear pointless to the population at large but was in fact of crucial importance. Notwithstanding Jean-Marie Le Pen's political rhetoric, the gas chambers were not a "detail". They were "the central weapon in an armoury designed to exclude nationalists from political life." It was because of this exclusion that the French people were crushed by taxation and delivered up defenceless by criminal governments to invasion by the third world" (7). In another article, Peltier described the gas chambers as the "key to the whole system". "Until the business of the 'detail' has been resolved," he wrote, "the deprived inner suburbs will continue to flare up and France will continue to sink." The point could hardly be made more clearly.

On 12 March 1998 Le Pen, accompanied by a party delegation, laid a wreath on the grave of François Duprat on behalf of the FN's political bureau. He paid tribute to his dead comrade as a man "wholly devoted to politics" and a "writer of talent". In so doing, he exposed the true nature of the National Front for all to see.

Translated by Barry Smerin

(1) *Le National*, April 1978.
(2) *National Hebdo*, 11 June 1986, p. 6.
(3) Marie-France Stirbois, "Un seul racisme : le racisme antifrançais", *Ecrits de Paris*, July-August 1990, p. 11.
(4) Bulletin du Front national, "1972-1992, le Front national a 20 ans. Le Front national c'est vous!", 1992, p. 11.
(5) Martin Peltier, "Ma semaine", *National Hebdo*, 15-21 January 1998, p. 2.
(6) Martin Peltier, "Ma semaine", *National Hebdo*, 18-24 December 1997, p. 2.
(7) Ibid.

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A CALL TO ARAB INTELLECTUALS

Israel-Palestine: a third way

This summer's decision by the Israeli government to accelerate settlement of occupied Palestinian territories – and judaise East Jerusalem, confirms the failure of the Oslo accords, if confirmation were needed. The impasse has revived the debate among Arab intellectuals concerning their responsibilities regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meanwhile in Israel there is a new debate about the nature of Zionism.

BY EDWARD W. SAID

NOW that Oslo has clearly been proven the deeply flawed and unworkable "peace" process that it really was from the outset, Arabs, Israelis and their various and sundry supporters need to think a great deal more, rather than less, clearly. A number of preliminary points seem to suggest themselves at the outset. "Peace" is now a discredited and fraudulent word, and is no guarantee that further harm and devastation will not ensue to the Palestinian people. How, after all the land confiscations, arrests, demolitions, prohibitions and killings that occurred unilaterally because of Israel's arrogance and power in the very context of the "peace process", can one continue to use the word "peace" without hesitation? It is impossible.

The Roman historian Tacitus says of the Roman conquest of Britain that "they [the Roman army] created a desolation, and called it peace". The very same thing happened to us as a people, with the willing collaboration of the Palestine Authority, the Arab states (with a few significant exceptions), Israel and the United States.

On the other hand, it is no use pretending that we can improve on the current deadlock, which in the Oslo framework as it stands is unbreakable, by returning to golden moments of the past. We can neither return to the days before the war of 1967, nor can we accept slogans of rejectionism that in effect send us back to the golden age of Islam. You cannot turn the wheel back. The only way to undo injustice, as Israel Shahak (1) and Azmi Bishara (2) have both said, is to create more justice, not to create new forms of vindictive injustice along the lines of "They have a Jewish state, we want an Islamic state."

It seems equally fatuous to impose total blockades against everything Israeli (now in fashion in various progressive Arab circles) and to pretend that that is the really virtuous nationalist path. There are, after all, 1 million Palestinians who are Israeli citizens. Are they also to be boycotted, as they were during the 1950s? And what about Israelis who support our struggle? Are they to be boycotted because they are Israeli? Obviously, to do so would be to pretend that the South African triumph over apartheid hadn't occurred, and to ignore all the many victories for justice that occurred because of non-violent political co-operation between like-minded people on both sides of a highly contested and moveable line. We cannot win this struggle by wishing that all the Jews would simply go away or that we could make everything become Islamic: we need all those on the other side who are partisan to our struggle. And we must cross the line of separation — which it has been one of the main intentions of Oslo to erect — that maintains current apartheid between Arab and Jew in historic Palestine. Go across, but do not enforce the line.

Last and perhaps most important, there is a great difference between political and intellectual behaviour. The intellectual's role is to speak the truth, as plainly, directly and as honestly as possible. No intellectual is supposed to worry about whether what is said embarrasses, pleases or displeases people in power. Speaking the truth means that the intellectual's constituency is neither a government nor a corporate nor a career interest: only the truth unadorned. Political behaviour principally relies upon considerations of interest — advancing a career, working with governments, maintaining one's position, etc. In the wake of Oslo, it is therefore obvious that continuing the line propagated by the three parties to its provisions, the Arab states, the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government, is political behaviour, not intellectual.

Take, for example, the joint declaration made by Egyptians and Israelis (mostly men) on behalf of the Cairo Peace Society and Peace Now. Remove all the high-sounding phrases about "peace" and not only do you get a ringing endorsement of Oslo, but also a return to the Sadat-Begin agreements of the late 1970s, which are described as courageous and momentous. Fine. But what does this have to do with Palestinians whose territory and self-determination were removed from those courageous and momentous Camp David documents? Besides, Egypt and Israel are still at peace.

What would people think if a few Israelis and Palestinians got together and issued ringing proclamations about Israeli-Syrian peace that were meant to "appeal" to those two governments? Crazy, most people would say. What entitles two parties, one which oppresses Palestinians and the other which has arrogated the right to speak for them, to proclaim peaceful goals in a conflict that is not between them? Moreover the idea of appealing to this Israeli government, expecting solutions from it, is like asking Count Dracula to speak warmly about the virtues of vegetarianism.

In short, political behaviour of this sort simply reinforces the hold of a dying succubus, Oslo, on the future of real peace, as opposed to fraudulent American-Israeli peace. But neither, I must also say, is it intellectually responsible in effect to return to blanket boycotts of the sort now becoming the fashion in various Arab countries. This sort of tactic — it is scarcely a strategy, any more than sticking one's head in the sand like an ostrich is a strategy — is regressive.

The notion of unilateral theocratic nationalism does not deal with the realities before us

Israel is not South Africa, nor Algeria, nor Vietnam. Whether we like it or not, the Jews are not ordinary colonialists. Yes, they suffered the holocaust, and yes, they are the victims of anti-Semitism. But no, they cannot use those facts to continue, or initiate, the dispossession of another people that bears no responsibility for either of those prior facts. I have been saying for 20 years that we have no military option, and are not likely to have one anytime soon. And neither does Israel have a real military option. Despite their enormous power, Israelis have not succeeded in achieving either the acceptance or the security they crave. On the other hand, not all Israelis are the same, and whatever happens, we must learn to live with them in some form, preferably justly, rather than unjustly.

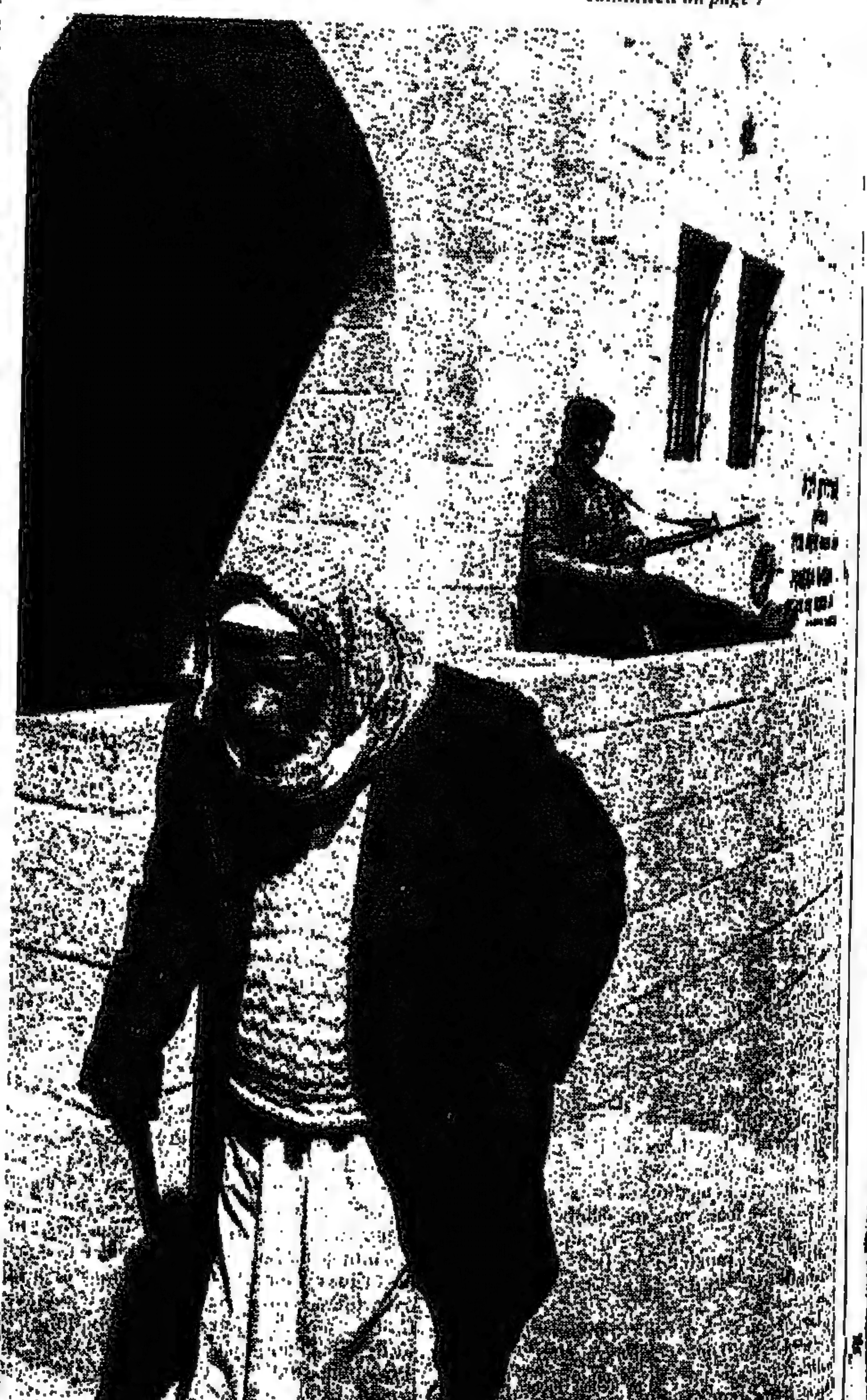
The third way avoids both the bankruptcy of Oslo and the retrograde policies of total boycotts. It must begin in terms of the idea of citizenship, not nationalism, since the notion of separation (Oslo) and of triumphalist unilateral theocratic nationalism whether Jewish or Muslim simply does not deal with the realities before us. Therefore a concept of citizenship whereby every individual has the same citizen's rights, based not on race or religion, but on equal justice for each person guaranteed by a constitution, must replace all our outmoded notions of how Palestine will be cleansed of the others' enemies. Ethnic cleansing is ethnic cleansing whether it is done by Serbians, Zionists, or Hamas.

What Azmi Bishara and several Israeli Jews like Ilan Pappé (3) are now trying to strengthen is a position and a politics by which Jews and Palestinians inside the Jewish state have the same rights. There is no reason why the same principle should not apply in the Occupied Territories where Palestinians and Israeli Jews live side by side, together, with only one people, Israeli Jews now dominating the other. So the choice is either apartheid or it is justice and citizenship.

We must recognize the realities of the holocaust not as a blank cheque for Israelis to abuse us, but as a sign of our humanity, our ability to understand history, our requirement that our suffering be mutually acknowledged. And we must also recognize that Israel is a dynamic society with many currents — not all of them Likud, Labour, and religious — within it. We must deal with those who recognise our rights. We should be willing as Palestinians to go to speak to Palestinians first, but to Israelis too, and we should tell our truths, not the stupid compromises of the sort that the PLO and PA have traded in, which in effect is the apartheid of Oslo.

The real issue is intellectual truth and the need to combat any sort of apartheid and racial discrimination, no matter who does it. There is now a creeping, nasty wave of anti-Semitism and hypocritical righteousness insinuating itself into our political thought and rhetoric. One thing must be clear in my firm opinion: we are not fighting the injustices of Zionism in order to replace them with an invidious nationalism (religious or civil) that decrees that Arabs in Palestine are more equal than others. The history of the modern Arab world — with all its political failures, its human rights abuses, its stunning military incompetences, its decreasing production, the fact that alone of all modern peoples, we have receded in democratic and technological and scientific development — is disfigured by a whole series of out-moded and discredited ideas, of which the notion that the Jews never suffered and that the holocaust is an obfusca-

continued on page 7


CAROLINE PENN

Edward W. Said is professor of comparative literature at Columbia University, New York, and author of Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We see the Rest of the World (Vintage, 1996)

continued from page 6

tory confection created by the Elders of Zion is one that is acquiring too much — far too much — currency.

Why do we expect the world to believe our sufferings as Arabs if (a) we cannot recognise the sufferings of others, even of our oppressors, and (b) we cannot deal with facts that trouble simplistic ideas of the sort propagated by bien-pensants intellectuals who refuse to see the relationship between the holocaust and Israel? Again, let me repeat that I cannot accept the idea that the holocaust excuses Zionism for what it has done to Palestinians: far from it. I say exactly the opposite, that by recognising the holocaust for the genocidal madness that it was, we can then demand from Israelis and Jews the right to link the holocaust to Zionist injustices towards the Palestinian, link and criticise the link for its hypocrisy and flawed moral logic. But to support Roger Garaudy, the French writer convicted earlier this year on charges of holocaust denial, in the name of "freedom of opinion" is a silly ruse that discredits us more than we already are discredited in the world's eyes for our incompetence, our failure to fight a decent battle, our radical misunderstanding of history and the world we live in. Why don't we fight harder for freedom of opinions in our own societies, a freedom, no one needs to be told, that scarcely exists?

When I mentioned the holocaust in an article I wrote last November (4), I received more stupid vilification than I ever thought possible: one famous intellectual even accused me of trying to gain a certificate of good behaviour from the Zionist lobby. Of course, I support Garaudy's right to say what he pleases and I oppose the wretched Gayssot law under which he was prosecuted (5). But I also think that what he says is trivial and irresponsible, and when we endorse it, it allies us with Jean-Marie Le Pen and all the retrograde rightwing fascist elements in French society. No, our battle is for democracy and equal rights, for a secular commonwealth or state in which all the members are equal citizens, in which the concept underlying our goal is a secular notion of citizenship and belonging, not some mythological essence or an idea that derives its authority from the remote past, whether that past is Christian, Jewish or Muslim.

As I said, the genius of Arab civilisation at its height in, say, Andalusia was its multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic diversity. That is the ideal that should be moving our efforts now, in the wake of an embalmed and dead Oslo, and an equally dead rejectionism. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life, as the Bible says. In the meantime we should concentrate our resistance on combating Israeli settlement with non-violent mass demonstrations that impede land confiscation, on creating stable and democratic civil institutions (hospitals and clinics, schools and universities, now in a horrendous decline, and work projects that will improve our infrastructure), and on fully confronting the apartheid provisions inherent in Zionism.

There are numerous prophecies of an impending explosion due to the stalemate. Even if they turn out to be true, we must plan constructively for our future, since neither improvisation nor violence are likely to guarantee the creation and consolidation of democratic institutions.

Original text in English

(1) A former director of the Human Rights League, Israel Shahak was one of the Israeli intellectuals most concerned with Palestinian rights. He was the author of *Jewish History, Jewish Religion. The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, Pluto Press, London, 1994.

(2) Lecturer in philosophy at Bir Zeit University and leader of the Democratic National Alliance, Azmi Bishara was elected a Member of the Knesset in the May 1996 elections on a joint platform with the Israeli Communist Party. He is known for his support of equal rights and self-government for the Israeli Arabs.

(3) Ilan Pappé is one of the most politically and historically committed of the Israeli "revisionist" historians. He is a member of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash).

(4) Al Hayat, 5 November 1997.

(5) Adopted on 13 July 1990, the Gayssot law, named after the French Communist Party leader, modifies French law on the freedom of the press by adding Article 24b, under which anyone who disputes "the existence of one or several crimes against humanity" is liable to punishment (one year's imprisonment and a fine of 300,000 francs). The applicability of the law, in so far as it has established a kind of "state truth", has been questioned by leading French intellectuals known for their staunch fight against holocaust denial.

ISRAEL AT FIFTY

Zionism's secular revolution

BY ZEEV STERNHELL

ISRAEL was born of Jewish distress. Because, during the 1930s and 1940s, it was the only refuge possible for Jews, first those from Germany, then those escaping genocide.

Zionism won a political support and moral legitimacy without which it is unlikely that Palestine's Jewish community could have formed itself into a state enjoying the support of two-thirds of the members of the United Nations. However, the necessity of saving Europe's Jews from physical destruction was not the only reason for presiding over the birth of Israel. Far from it.

Forged in Europe at the turn of the century, Zionism set out to conquer Palestine before the first world war, although at this time there were easier solutions to the immediate needs of the victims of pogroms, humiliation and economic ostracism than the appropriation of a far-off land in which to build a state. And until 1924, the year that the United States closed its doors, only 60,000 of the 2,400,000 Jews who were fleeing Eastern Europe had taken the road to Palestine. Many of those proved unable to adapt to the tough conditions of life and left the country.

The hard core of founders was composed of several thousand boys and girls, mostly very young: it is to them that we owe the political, economic and cultural organisation that allowed the Zionist project to take shape, then succeed. Firmly convinced that they had been charged with a unique mission, persuaded of the justice of their vision of history, it was this revolutionary élite, nationalist to the hilt, hard on itself and on others, that orchestrated the conquest of the country and was in the commanding role until the start of the 1970s.

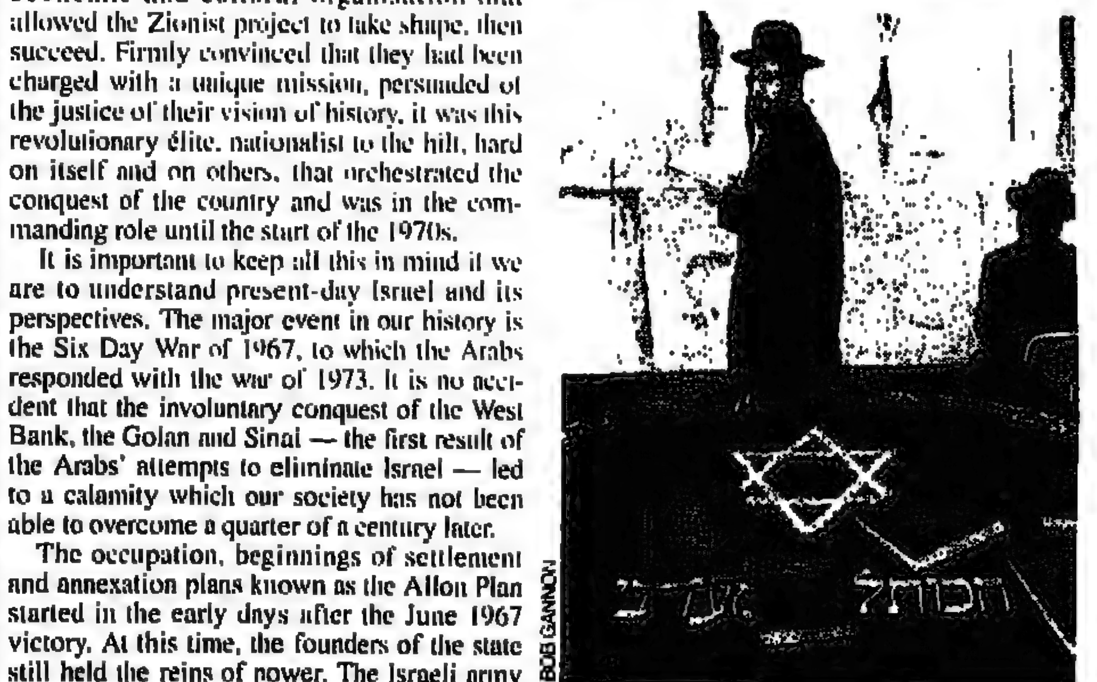
It is important to keep all this in mind if we are to understand present-day Israel and its perspectives. The major event in our history is the Six Day War of 1967, to which the Arabs responded with the war of 1973. It is no accident that the involuntary conquest of the West Bank, the Golan and Sinai — the first result of the Arabs' attempts to eliminate Israel — led to a calamity which our society has not been able to overcome a quarter of a century later.

The occupation, beginnings of settlement and annexation plans known as the Allon Plan started in the early days after the June 1967 victory. At this time, the founders of the state still held the reins of power. The Israeli army stopped at the Jordan, the Suez canal and within shooting distance of Damascus only four years after David Ben Gurion, who had arrived from Poland in 1906, had ceased to be prime minister. In 1922, already at the head of the Histradut conglomerate, both trade union and employer, and building block of the nascent state, he declared that the only concern was conquering the land and restructuring it by means of wholesale immigration. The rest was rhetoric. Neither he nor his successors would ever depart from that line.

If Ben Gurion's successor, Levi Eshkol, displayed a moderate temperament, he was not able to formulate a peace plan. He also shared that ideology of conquest. For him, too, the war of independence had only just ended. It would be wrong to believe that Eshkol had been unable to resist joint pressures from the hawks of the younger generation, like Defence Minister Moshe Dayan, or Ben Gurion's other protégé, Shimon Peres, or Yigal Allon, who beat the Egyptians in 1948. On the contrary, the prime minister had little difficulty in agreeing with them. In fact, the whole Labour dynasty, in power up till 1977, remained faithful to that doctrine laid down in the early days of agricultural settlement: do not yield land or position, unless constrained by superior force.

This principle is in fact shared by both wings of Zionism, the Labour one and the rightwing "revisionist" wing. The latter first came to power in 1977 and was responsible for the great expansionist wave of the 1980s as well as the 1982 Lebanon war. At its core, all Zionism is just a classic variation of that closed nationalism which appeared in Europe at the turn of the century, just as the liberal nationalism that emerged from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution was on the wane.

Jewish nationalism is hardly any different from the nationalism of Central and Eastern Europe: ethnocentric, religious and cultural, immersed in the cult of an heroic past. It has no difficulty in refusing to others the same elementary rights which, in all tranquillity, it demands for itself. Thus Zionism, confident of its right to reclaim all the historic land of its kings and prophets, was unable to conceive that there could be any other legitimacy in the land of the Bible. So we must ascribe the beginnings of our settlement of Arab lands occupied in June 1967 to the very nature of our nationalism, not to the heady victories of war or the passing extinction of some humanist value. If we had just wanted to keep the territories as bargaining counters for peace against the day the Arabs were prepared to negotiate, why not have kept them under the


BOB GANNON

rules of strict military occupation together with absolute respect for international law?

It was not just Golda Meir, prime minister at the time of the 1973 war, who was afflicted with the blindness of negating the Arab national movement. She was another representative of the pioneering generation. Generals Allon and Dayan, too, both born in Palestine and legendary war heroes, may have been emblems of the modern Jew, but they still had the same set of references as their elders. The 1970s' élite — including Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, who first came to power in 1974 — believed that to accept the idea of a double legitimacy in Palestine would be to undermine the very foundations of Zionism. In this, they were no different from the authors of Labour's national thinking who arrived at the beginning of the century. The Palestinians could have rights as individuals but not as a national entity, and claiming independence was out of the question.

Everyone apart from a few eccentrics was in agreement on these principles at the end of the Six Day War. None of the so-called pragmatists was able to muster a valid answer to the classic question: why was it legitimate to colonise the Galilee if it was no longer just to do so on the Golan? Why did we have the right to confiscate the land belonging to Arabs who had fled or been kicked out in 1948 if it was forbidden to occupy the land which fell into our hands in 1967?

It was only in time that the circle of activist minorities grew large enough to say that the victory of 1949 and the founding of Israel had traced a historic line, a parting of the waters: what was acceptable before the victory was no longer acceptable after the founding of Israel.

Zionism's moral right to a part of Palestine — not all of Palestine — came from the Jews' existential necessity to find refuge and make a state for themselves. No people anywhere in the world had more need of a home. But once this objective had been reached the situation totally changed. In no way could the status of the territories conquered in 1967 be likened to that of the conquests of 1949. Even today only a minority of Israelis feel sufficiently sure of themselves to articulate this clear conceptual framework.

Which is why there was no visionary capable of raising the flag of a new Zionism to succeed the conqueror-Zionism of the first half of the century. That is until the Oslo accords — signed by men who had shown total conformity when they were in power twenty years earlier. Rabin and Peres, to their credit, finally dared put an end to the mediocre debate — the only debate which ever really concerned our élite — between extreme annexationists and those who favoured some form of "territorial compromise". That meant annexing the Golan, the Jordan valley, some parts of Judaea and Samaria, with the rest of it going to King Hussein of Jordan. However, as a result of Oslo, Yitzhak Rabin was killed and Shimon Peres fell from power.

However, this transformation would not have been possible without the deep currents that were coursing through Israeli society. For there is a correlation between the evolution of our society and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The land-owning mystique which dictated the territorial policy decisions of our successive rulers, both Labour and Likud, always came back to the history-religion continuum, foundation of all Zionism, including its "secular" wing.

This mystique was widely shared. Which is why all the Zionist streams, religious and secular, right and left, despite all their differences, wanted the widest possible borders. For everyone, Zionism was defined in terms of culture, history, religion. The notion of Israeli citizenship most often seemed like a sort of legal fiction: non-Jewish citizens were not part of the family.

It took the appearance of deep cracks in the history-religion continuum for the Oslo accords to see the light of day. The existence of the state itself created a new dynamic. The normalisation of the Jewish condition, the appearance of third- and fourth-generation Israelis, modernisation and the opening up to the outside world produced phenomena unknown in the past: our society became engaged in a liberalisation which inexorably shattered the old one-dimensional Zionism.

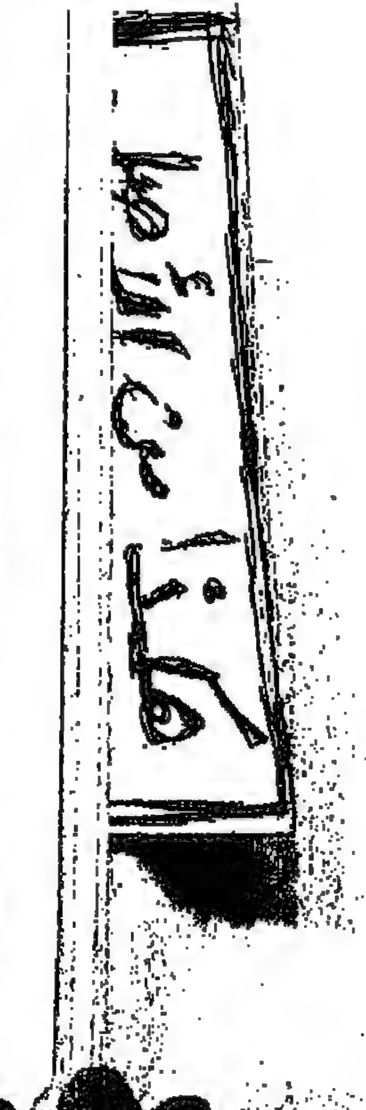
For the first time we were seeing something truly individualistic, secular, basing identity on aspirations to freedom and self-determination, on people's freely expressed will and not on history and old stones. It is a revolution fiercely contested by the old Zionism of blood and earth. The West Bank settlers and their Likud allies are right to maintain that recognition of Palestinian national rights marks the end of an era.

Israel continues to draw nearer, if often with too much hesitation and too little speed, to the traditions of the Enlightenment. A growing number of intellectuals feel closer to the nationalism of a Michelet than to that of Johann Gottfried Herder who, at the start of the century, had animated Zionism in Eastern Europe. Today's writers and artists are worlds away from the famous names of the previous generation who were often associated with the founding of the Movement for a Greater Israel after the Six Day War.

Attitudes different from original Zionism are becoming more frequent. In spite of the real culture war still ahead and some massive resistance (Rabin's assassination is not necessarily the last act of the drama), the second Zionist revolution — humanist, rationalist and secular — is already under way.

Translated by Wendy Kristianasen

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FROM WELFARE STATE TO PRISON STATE

Imprisoning the American poor

Prisons in the 'free world' are full to bursting point and American jails are the fullest of all. Over the past 20 years, preoccupation with law and order has led to a toughening of penalties, and the worst hit have been those excluded from the American dream. The United States is constantly tightening its belt in terms of social welfare, but the reverse is true when it comes to incarcerating those whom it has deigned neither to educate nor care for. Those who are trying to justify criminalising the underclass invoke 'realism' and a need to 'combat insecurity'. Alarmingly, this trend is now catching on elsewhere.

BY LOIC WACQUANT

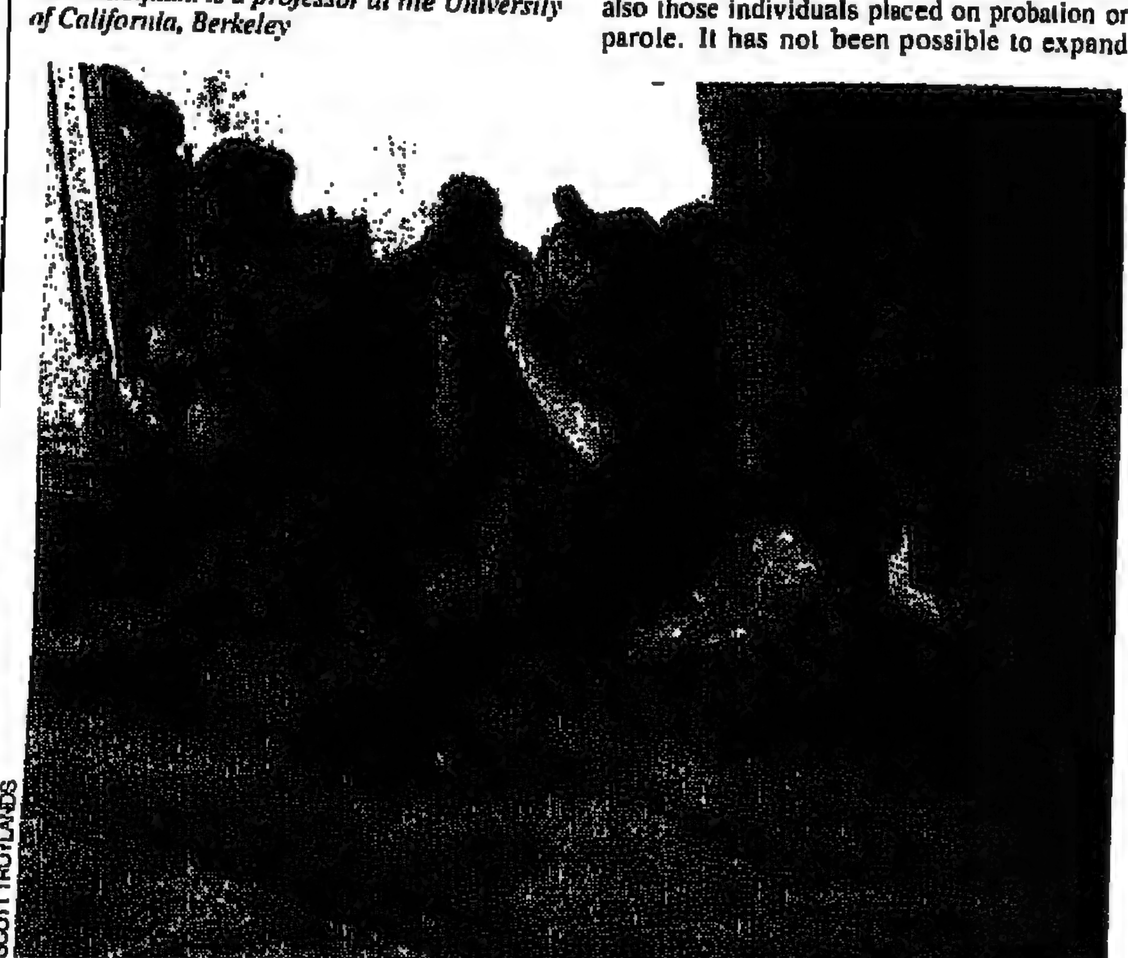
JUST as in those heady post-war days, Europe's political élites, bosses and opinion-formers are looking to the United States with fascination and envy, largely because of the performance of the US economy. Allegedly, the key to US prosperity and the supposed solution to mass unemployment is simple: less intervention by the state. It is true that the United States — and in its wake, the United Kingdom and New Zealand — has slashed social welfare spending and pared down the rules on hiring and, above all, firing so as to establish "flexible" working as the norm in relation to employment and indeed citizenship. It is easy for advocates of neo-liberal policies that involve stifling the welfare state to claim that introducing "flexibility" has stimulated an increase in wealth and job creation, but they are more reticent about discussing the consequences of wage dumping: in this instance widespread social and physical insecurity and a spiralling in inequality leading to segregation, crime and the decay of public institutions.

But it is not enough to measure the direct social and human costs of the system of social insecurity that the US is proffering as a model to the rest of the world (1). There is also its sociological counterpart: a boom in the institutions that compensate for the failures of social protection (the safety net) by casting over the lower strata of society a police and criminal dragnet that gets harder and harder to escape. As the social state is deliberately allowed to wither, the police state flourishes: the direct and inevitable effect of impoverishing and weakening social protection.

The increase in the prison population, control of increasing numbers of people on the margins of the prison system, the spectacular boom in the penal sector at both federal and state level, and the continuing rise in the number of black prisoners are the four significant factors defining penal trends in the United States since the complete change in social and racial attitudes that began in the 1970s. That change was triggered by the democratic progress secured as a result of Black protest and the popular protest movements that surged in its wake (students, women, opponents of the Vietnam war and environmentalists) (2).

Prisoner numbers have risen dramatically at all three tiers of the prison system: in the town and county jails, in the central penitentiaries of the 50 states and in the federal penitentiaries. During the 1960s the US prison population was shrinking, so much so that by 1975 it had fallen to 380,000, having declined slowly but consistently (by about 1% a year over a 10-year period). The talk at the time was of emptying the prisons, of alternatives to imprisonment and of reserving jail sentences for criminals who posed a serious threat (between 10% and 15% of the prison population); there were even those who ventured to predict that there would soon be no prisons at all (3). But that trend was rapidly and dramatically reversed: 10 years later the prison population had soared to 740,000 and, by 1995, it was in excess of 1.6 million. During the 1990s, prisoner numbers have been increasing by 8% annually.

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A tripling of the prison population in 15 years is unprecedented in a democratic society. It leaves the US far outstripping the other developed countries since its rate of imprisonment — 645 detainees per 100,000 of the population in 1997, that is five times the 1973 level — is between six to 10 times higher than that of the countries of the European Union *(see table)* (4). Not even South Africa in the days of the apartheid regime was throwing as many of its citizens into jail as the US currently does.

5.4 million US citizens somewhere in the prison system

IN California, not so long ago the national champion of education and public health but now a believer in prison across-the-board, the number of prisoners held in its state jails alone rose from 17,300 in 1975 to 48,300 in 1985 and, by 1995, had passed the 130,000 mark. If we add to that the number of prisoners held in the county jails (Los Angeles alone holds 20,000 prisoners), the total is a staggering 200,000, equivalent to the population of a large French provincial town.

But the extraordinary expansion of the US penal empire extends beyond the great "lock-up" as the century draws to a close. There are also those individuals placed on probation or parole. It has not been possible to expand prison capacity fast enough to absorb the growing stream of convicts, with the result that the numbers kept on the margins of the prison system have increased even more quickly than the number held inside. In 1995, 3.1 million people were on parole and 700,000 on probation, a total of nearly 4 million, representing more or less a fourfold increase over 16 years. Consequently, in 1995, there were 5.4 million Americans in prison or within the prison system, accounting for 5% of men aged 18 and over, and one in five black males (the reason for which will become clear below).

What is more, in addition to intermediate penalties available to it, such as house arrest or confinement in a boot camp (disciplinary detention centre), intensive probation and telephonic or electronic surveillance (using bracelets or other technical gadgetry), the penal system has been able to spread its tentacles considerably further as a result of the increase in the number of data banks that have provided many new ways and centres of distance monitoring. During the 1970s and the 1980s, the Law Enforcement Administration Agency (the federal body responsible for crime prevention) encouraged the police, courts and prison authorities to set up centralised and computerised data banks, and they have since proliferated.

The new synergy between the penal system's "capture" and "observation" functions (5) means that there are now more than 250 million "rap sheets" (as against 35 million 10 years ago) covering some 30 million individuals: close on one third of all adult males! The data banks can be accessed not only by the FBI and the INS (responsible for policing foreigners) and the social services, but also by individuals and private bodies. Employers commonly use data banks to sift out ex-prisoners trying to find work. And so what if the data is frequently incorrect, out-of-date, trivial or indeed illegal? The fact that it is available leaves not only criminals and crime suspects, but also their families, friends, neighbours and neighbourhoods, targets of the police and prison system (6).

The lust for prisons is both dependent on and triggers a spectacular expansion in the penal sector at federal and local level. All the more remarkable because it comes at a time when the public sector is having to tighten its belt. Between 1979 and 1990, the states increased their spending on prisons by 325% on operational costs and 612% on buildings — that is to say three times more rapidly than national military spending, even though the latter enjoyed a privileged position under the Reagan and Bush administrations.

Since 1992, four states have allocated more than a billion dollars to prison spending: California ($3.2 billion), New York State ($2.1 billion), Texas ($1.3 billion) and Florida ($1.1 billion). All in all, in 1993, the United States spent 50% more on its prisons than on the judiciary ($32 billion as compared with $21 billion), whereas 10 years earlier, budget levels were the same for both (in the region of $7 billion).

The policy of prison expansion is not, however, a Republican prerogative. Over the past five years, President Bill Clinton has been declaring just how proud he is to have put an end to "big government", and the commission for reform of the federal state, chaired by his would-be successor, Vice-President Al Gore, has been busy pruning public sector programmes and jobs. Meanwhile 213 new prisons have been built — a figure that does not include the private institutions that have proliferated as a lucrative market in the sector has been opened up *(see below)*. At the same time, the number of employees in federal and state penitentiaries alone has risen from 264,000 to 347,000. Consequently, according to the office of census, the training and hiring of prison officials is the area of government activity that has seen the most rapid growth over the past decade.

The money has to come from somewhere, and when there is a fiscal squeeze, the only way of increasing spending on prisons and prison staff is to cut the resources allocated to social welfare, health and education. De facto, the United States has opted to construct detention centres and prisons for its poor, rather than clinics, day nurseries and schools (7). Since 1994, for instance, the annual budget of the California Department of Correction (responsible for state detention centres in which prisoners serving more than a year are held) has been higher than that allocated to the University of California. The budget that Governor Pete Wilson proposed in 1995 was actually designed to get rid of a 1000 jobs in higher education in order to fund jobs for 3,000 prison warders. That is a decision that weighs heavily on the public purse because in California a "screw" earns 30% more than a lecturer thanks to the political influence wielded by the prisoner officers' trade union.

Along with this boom in the prison sector has come "lateral" expansion of the penal system and thus a huge increase in its capacity to hold and neutralise. But the main "beneficiaries" of this additional capacity are poor families and districts, and particularly black enclaves in the cities. That much is clear from the fourth major trend in the US prison system: a continuing rise in the numbers of Black prisoners, so much so that since 1989 and for the first time in history, Black Americans make up the bulk of prisoners, even though they account for barely 12% of the total US population.

Discriminatory police practices

IN 1995, of 22 million black adults, 767,000 were held in prison, 990,000 were on probation and 325,000 others on parole — a total of 9.4% caught somewhere in the grip of the prison system. As far as Whites are concerned, an estimate that is on the high side puts the figure at 1.9% for a population of 163 million adults (8). In terms of prisoner numbers alone, the disparity between the two population groups is 1:7.5, and it has been steadily worsening over the past 10 years: 528 compared with 3,544 for every 100,000 adults in 1985, and 919 compared with 6,926 10 years later *(see table)*. Over his lifetime, a Black male has a one-in-three chance of spending at least a year in prison and an Hispanic a one-in-six chance, whereas a White has just a one-in-23 chance.

This phenomenon — that criminologists tactfully refer to as "racial disproportionality" — is even more marked among young people, prime targets of the criminalisation of poverty. More than a third of Blacks aged between 20 and 29 years are either in prison, under the authority of a judge responsible for the execution of sentences, or awaiting trial. In the big cities, the figure is substantially higher than 50%, and in some places, in the heart of the ghetto, in excess of 80%. So much so that, to take an expression borrowed from the tragic memory of the Vietnam War, the operation of the US justice system could be described as a "search and destroy" mission targeted on young Blacks (9).

A predisposition to crime only partly explains the huge disparity between Whites and Blacks in the prison population. Mainly, it reflects the fundamentally discriminatory nature of police, court and prison practice. The proof is that Blacks account for 13% of drug users (more or less equivalent to the proportion of Blacks in the population) but a third of those arrested and three-quarters of those imprisoned for drug offences. The policy of a "war on drugs", along with abandonment of the goal of rehabilitation and an increase in ultra-repressive penalties (the widespread application of a system of irreducible fixed penalties, automatic life imprisonment for a third offence and more severe penalties for public order offences), is one of the main causes of the rise in the prison population (10).

In 1995 six out of 10 of those newly convicted were put in jail for possessing or dealing in drugs. Imprisonment is one area in which Blacks benefit from "positive discrimination", in itself an irony at a time when the US is turning its back on the affirmative action programmes that were designed to reduce the most glaring racial inequalities in access to education and jobs.

Europe "lagging behind"

Rates of imprisonment in the United States and Europe in 1993 (number of prisoners per 100,000 of population)

United States	546
Georgia	730
Texas	700
California	607
Florida	636
Michigan	550
New York	519
Italy	89
United Kingdom	86
France	84
Germany	80
Holland	51

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Correctional Populations in the United States, Washington 1996, and Council of Europe, Penological Information Bulletin No 19-20, December 1995.

Justice "by race"

Number of prisoners per 100,000 adults

	1985	1990	1995
Blacks	3,544	5,365	6,926
Whites	528	718	919
Disparity	3,016	4,647	8 007
Ratio6.7	7.4	7.5	

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Correctional Populations in the United States, 1995, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1997.

But what matters more than all the statistics is the rationale underlying the shift from social welfare to a toughening in penal policy. Far from being inconsistent with the neo-liberal programme of deregulation and decline of the public sector, the rise in prominence of the US penal system reveals the true picture, reflecting a policy of criminalising poverty, which inevitably goes hand-in-hand with the imposition of insecure and underpaid jobs, as well as the restructuring of social welfare programmes to make them more restrictive and punitive. When imprisonment was institutionalised in America in the mid-19th century, it was primarily conceived as a method of controlling deviant and dependent population groups, and the majority of those imprisoned were the poor and immigrant workers newly arrived in the New World (11).

Nowadays the US prison system performs a similar role in regard to those groups who have been rendered superfluous or who no longer fit in as a result of the restructuring of both employment relations and public welfare: the shrinking working class and the Blacks. As a result, it has become a vital instrument of government by poverty, used to underpin the principle of flexible working at the point where the market in unskilled labour, the urban ghetto and the "reformed" social services meet.

Unemployment under wraps

TO begin with, the prison system makes a direct contribution to regulating the lower segments of the labour market — and does so in infinitely more coercive fashion than any social charge or administrative rule. Its effect here is artificially to compress unemployment levels both by forcibly abstracting millions of males from the job-seeking population, and also by boosting employment in the prison goods and service sector. It is, for example, estimated that during the 1990s US prisons brought down US unemployment figures by two percentage points. According to Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett, taking into account the differences in levels of imprisonment in the two continents, and contrary to the idea commonly accepted and actively disseminated by the advocates of neo-liberalism, for 18 of the past 20 years US unemployment rates have been higher than those of the European Union (12).

However, Western and Beckett show that the jump in the prison population is a two-edged weapon: while in the short term it makes the employment picture look rosier by cutting labour supply, in the longer term it will inevitably worsen the employment situation by making millions of people more or less unemployable. Although imprisonment has cut US unemployment levels, the prison system will have constantly to be abandoned to keep those levels down.

The fact that Blacks are massively and increasingly over-represented at all levels of the prison system highlights its second function in this new form of government by poverty: it is to replace the ghetto as a means of containing population groups considered deviant and dangerous, not to mention superfluous from both an economic and a political point of view — Mexican and Asian immigrants are far more docile. Poor Blacks hardly ever bother to vote and the country's electoral centre of gravity has in any event shifted towards the White suburbs. To that extent, prison is merely the ultimate manifestation of a policy of exclusion of which the ghetto has been a means and an end since it first appeared in history.

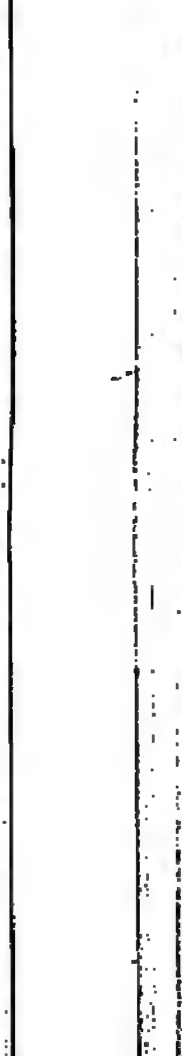
The penal institutions are now directly tuned into the bodies and programmes responsible for "assisting" marginal groups. While the ethos of punishment inherent in the penal system tends to contaminate and then redefine the aims and machinery of social welfare, prisons have, like it or not, to deal urgently — and with the resources available to them — with the social and medical ills that their "clientèle" has been unable to remedy elsewhere. Finally, the effect of budgetary constraints and the political philosophy of decreasing state intervention has been to open up both social assistance and prisons to the market. Many states, like Texas and Tennessee, are already keeping substantial numbers of prisoners in private jails and sub-contracting to specialist companies responsibility for administrative follow-up of recipients of welfare benefits. One way of earning a buck from the poor and criminals, both ideologically and economically.

What then we are witnessing is the establishment of a commercial socio-penal complex designed to monitor and penalise those population groups that refuse to submit to the new economic order (13) with a gender-based division of labour: the penal element covers males in the main, while the welfare component supervises the women and children. And the same people shuffle around within this more or less closed circle.

The American experience shows that today, just as at the end of the last century, rigidly separating social policy and penal policy — or, to take it one further, the labour market, social welfare (if you can still call it that) and prison — means that we are left understanding neither (14). Wherever it becomes a reality, the neo-liberal Utopia brings with it, for the poorest in society and also for all who find themselves excluded from what remains of protected employment, not more, but less freedom, or indeed no freedom at all. It does this by taking us back to the repressive paternalism of another age when capitalism was rampant, now bolstered by an omniscient and omnipotent punitive state.

Translated by Julie Stoker

(1) See articles on "Eternel retour du 'miracle' américaine", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1997, and Loïc Wacquant, "La généralisation de l'insécurité sociale en Amérique", Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, December 1996.
(2) David Chalmers, *And the Crooked Places Made Straight: The Struggle for Social Change in the 1960s*, Temple University Press, Philadephia, 1991, and James T. Patterson, Grand Expectations: The United States 1945-1974, Oxford University Press, 1996.
(3) On those debates, see Norval Morris, *The Future of Imprisonment*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1974.
(4) Unless stated otherwise, all of these statistics are drawn from various publications of the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the Federal Department of Justice (in particular its periodic reports on Correctional Populations in the United States, Washington, Government Printing Office).
(5) Diana Gordon gives an excellent description of that synergy in *The Justice Juggernaut: Fighting Street Crime*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1991.
(6) The State of Illinois has put on the Internet the description and a summary of the criminal record of all of its prisoners, so that anyone can find out about a prisoner's previous offences just by clicking the mouse.
(7) See the data compiled by Steve Gold, *Trends in State Spending*, Center for the Study of the States, Rockefeller Institute of Government, Albany (New York), 1991.
(8) That estimate actually makes no distinction between Whites of Anglosaxon origin and people of Hispanic origin, thereby automatically pushing up the level of Whites of European origin. The effect is being compounded as time goes by with rates of imprisonment rising most rapidly among Hispanics in recent times.
(9) Title of Jerome Miller's authoritative work, *Search and Destroy: African-American Males in the Criminal Justice System*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.
(10) For a discussion of these various points, see Loïc Wacquant, "Crime et châtiment en Amérique de Nixon à Clinton", Archives de politique criminelle, Paris, No 20, Spring 1998.
(11) David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1971, pp 239-240.
(12) Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett, "How Unregulated Is the US Labor Market? The Penal System as a Labor Market Institution", presentation to the annual congress of the American Sociological Association, 39 pages, 1997, p. 31.
(13) Loïc Wacquant, "Les pauvres en pâture: la nouvelle politique de la misère en Amérique", Hérodote, Paris, No 85, Spring 1997.
(14) As shown by David Garland in *Punishment and Welfare: A History of Penal Strategies*, Gower, Aldershot, 1985, in regard to the paradigm case of Victorian England.



ALGERIA IN THE GRIP OF TERROR

Hopes and lost illusions

There has always been a lack of understanding between Algeria and its women. During the 1950s and 1960s Algerian women were in the vanguard of the struggle for liberation. But nowadays the relative freedom of the 'sisters', famous for having 'fought like men', has almost ceased to exist. It began to disappear in 1972 when the Family Code threatened to institutionalise male guardianship and women had to mobilise in order to impose a temporary defeat on the country's Revolutionary Council. Since the early 1980s the Islamists have weighed in on the side of continuing this patriarchal society. But Algeria's women have minds of their own. Malika tells her story.

BY BAYA GACEMI

"BEFORE me there was my mother, after me there will be my daughters. I merely occupy a fleeting transitional stage. The women of my generation thought they had blazed a trail for the women who were to come after them. We were wrong: three generations have brought three different visions of the world."

Malika is neither indifferent nor disappointed. She simply says she has been "a bit taken aback", especially since her elder daughter took up praying in a serious way three years ago. "I know I can't just put it down to one of those mystical crises which teenagers often go through" she admits, "I can see this is something different." One day her daughter turned to her and said "You may think you are an authentic Algerian woman, but you are really only a poor copy of a European woman". Since then she has been trying to understand what is going on. To her mind, women should follow their own path through life: education, followed by a job and full emancipation. For her, there was never any question of wearing a veil, which she considers to be "the symbol of patriarchal repression." Besides which, no one ever thought of doing so.

When she sees how her daughters are developing, Malika realises that reality does not correspond to what she dreamt of. "I had underestimated the cultural influences," she admits, and then she points to one of the perverse effects which the economic crisis has had on society in general and women in particular: "Since people have nothing to gain from the state, they have turned against it and, because they do not approve of the choices the state has made, they have reverted to the only thing they can be sure of — their ancestral values."

Convictions

MALIKA works in a public company; she has short hair and is vivacious and sporty. She says she has never really suffered any sexual discrimination in her professional life, but she recognises that her managerial status, her liveliness and her lack of shyness have been a great help. Born a few years before independence into a disadvantaged family, at the age of 44 she considers she has been quite lucky and has made the most of her life. She has inherited the convictions and plain speaking of her father, a factory worker, who, although he could not read or write, did not allow this to stop him from becoming an active trade union member .

A divorced mother of daughters aged 17 and 14, intelligent and a good listener, she does, however, reproach herself on one major point, that she did not anticipate the developments which she is now witnessing. "My mother couldn't read or write herself but she set great store by education. To her mind, women's salvation lay in education — and Boumedienne." There was no doubting at that time the direction which history would follow — total liberation for women.

Malika was 10 at the time of independence. In her small coastal town, Skikda in eastern Algeria, her parents used to say to her when they saw the ships full of *pieds-noirs*: "You're the ones who will be taking their place, children. This country belongs to us now, and our daughters will work alongside their brothers to build it."

Things did not always turn out to be as easy as that, of course, but Malika does not have bad memories of those years by and large. In fact, quite the contrary. As a computer engineer, she received a grant as did all those who passed their baccalaureat in those days. The agricultural revolution for her meant further training in voluntary service and devotion. "University students were required to help the illiterate peasants. We were sincere. Yes, voluntary service during those campaigns enabled students — girls and boys alike — to unite in a common cause and to experience a fraternity which they couldn't feel elsewhere." Parents did not mind that kind of mixing between girls and boys. "What was most surprising was the attitude of our mothers. Although they were very traditional, they soon, without even realising it, totally changed their thinking. They accepted that their daughters could do things which they would never have been allowed to do themselves, although at home there were certain taboos which definitely remained."



GUY LE QUERREC

'My mother couldn't read or write. To her mind, women's salvation lay in education'

Malika's mother had a very set idea of what the Algerian woman of the future would be like. No veil, well educated and hard-working. Widespread education would create generations who would moor Algeria alongside the good ship Europe. Schooling would enable daughters to break free from the restraints of the family, to throw off the weight of traditions, to free themselves and become responsible adults in charge of their own destinies. "Nowadays, when I hear people say that it's education which has brought about fundamentalism, I must say I am rather surprised."

There were already worrying signs, though. The battles, which were many and bitter, surrounding the drafting of a code of family law provided the clearest evidence of this. But who, during those years following independence, could have realised the dangers, when people continued to proclaim the great revolutionary ideals and the principles of equality and progress? Malika, like the majority of her girlfriends, followed the sporadic debates on the status of women without paying much attention to them. For her, the pressures exerted by the traditionalists were little more than "minor incursions in a history which was calmly following its natural course".

The first serious alert came in 1972. That year a family code was placed before the Revolutionary Council, which was the only body in power at that time. It strengthened and codified the customs of a profoundly patriarchal society and introduced the guardianship of men over women, who were to be treated as minors from the cradle to the grave. A marriage contract, for example, could be made only between a husband and the wife's guardian, namely the girl's father or one of her uncles or her brother (even if he was younger than her), or, in the absence of a male relative, a judge. In the event of divorce the woman lost everything, both her home and her parental status, even where the children were entrusted to her. This highly retrograde document was nearly adopted. Only an outcry managed to abort the project, which threatened to legalise the tragic situation which was already a de facto reality for many women.

Gathered around the *mujahedates* (women fighters in the war of liberation, which had not yet lost its aura) and the Union nationale des femmes algériennes (the UNFA, linked to the FLN, but widely infiltrated at that time by communist militants), women university students, employees and trade unionists mobilised in force. They organised a large number of demonstrations, in particular in front of the government building. Their slogan was "We want full citizenship" and their argument, addressed to their former comrades-in-arms, was that they had borne arms like them and had sacrificed themselves like them. However, the majority of the mujahedin replied that women would be just as well off at home with a pension, bringing up children now the country had been liberated.

In the absence of a parliament it was not that difficult to curb the Revolutionary Council. The latter derived its legitimacy from the war of liberation and had no interest in alienating itself from the representatives of the female population, especially its heroines. It continued, therefore, regularly to pay homage to the courage of its "sisters" who had fought "like men" during the war (although it failed to include any women among its number). The Revolutionary Council managed to resist the attacks of the traditionalists for some time, but it showed itself to be less firm as the years went on especially when it needed their help to ensure the adoption of some of its projects (in particular the 1974 agricultural reform).

When the first demonstrations by the Islamists started in 1975, Malika was a student and she did not pay any attention to them. "They couldn't frighten us; they were going against the tide of history." Her mother who was a religious woman, was more worried and more critical. Even though she could not even read and had always been confined to the home, she criticised the aggressive young people whom she accused of "wanting to take us back into the stone age".

Feminists

IT WAS not until the early 1980s that the pressure grew really strong and reality had to be faced. In March 1980, Malika remembers, the Islamists organised the first march in their history and managed to assemble 5,000 partisans in front of Algiers University. Almost immediately the first feminist groups were formed in the universities, taking advantage of the political openness introduced by President Chadli Bendjedid. In spite of all their efforts, these movements failed to take root outside the main towns. Illiteracy, which has returned to the country over the past 10 years and now affects over 40% of the population, doubtless has something to do with this.

The real shock was to come four years later in 1984, with the adoption of the family code. "All the most inequitable clauses, the ones which had been excluded in 1972, such as polygamy, the question of partial inheritance for women, and especially the total submission of a woman to her guardian, were all made legal. It was quite contrary to the constitution, which is very egalitarian." Malika tries, however, to derive something positive from the trauma she has experienced: "It forced us to abandon our illusions and collect our wits. We realised that the campaign had to be fought in earnest and we could no longer

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Baya Gacemi is a journalist in Algiers

A SOCIETY SCARRED BY CIVIL WAR

Mafia threatens Algeria's economy

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT FAYÇAL KARABADJI

"I DROPPED out of university three months ago. I only had two more semesters to go to get my engineering degree. But what's the point? I'd had enough of bomb scares in the train between Algiers and Bab Ezzouar university. Enough of lectures cancelled because the teaching staff weren't there. Anyway, then my brother suggested I work with him. He's set up a little import/export business and it's going well. I earn over 90,000 dinars ($1,500) a month on average, more than the country's top engineers. More even than a government minister, I think."

Hamid, a native of Algiers, is fairly typical of his generation. It is a generation of new businessmen, young people who invest in trade, but in a more organised and legal manner than their predecessors. While the older generation would travel to and from Europe, Morocco or Tunisia to buy goods and sell them again — their makeshift organisations largely dependent on obtaining visas or the good will of customs officers — their successors have discovered legality. They have a trade register and they pay their taxes; they use fax, the Internet, letters of credit; and they use containers for their imports.

"Smuggling and the so-called shopping trips — they're things of the past," Hamid continues. "Now, when we go abroad, it's to meet with suppliers or negotiate with banks. That's why educated people are less ashamed to go into business."

The liberalisation of foreign trade in 1994 and its opening to the private sector paved the way for the creation of more than 3,000 import-export companies. The convertibility of the dinar enabled Algerian entrepreneurs to import nearly $2 billion worth of goods in 1997. In Algeria, such enterprises are popularly known as "import-export companies". It is as good a way as any of highlighting the fact that these new entrepreneurs are quite incapable of exporting or facing up to international competition — all they are doing is squandering the country's foreign currency reserves.

"Export?" Hamid asks. "Export what? To export, the country would have to have factories that worked, that produced something other than oil and dates. No one wants to go into manufacturing yet. The best way of making money in Algeria is to trade. Even people who've got factories prefer to close them and go over to importing." Numbed by all the years of violence, Algerians shrug their shoulders at these war millionaires who have no qualms about flaunting their wealth.

"The latest luxury cars from Germany are on the streets of Algiers even before they appear in France or Italy," an outraged teacher remarks. "There was a time when people were afraid to show their wealth. But for several months now, the terrorist groups have been less active in the cities and posh cars are starting to reappear and people have begun having lavish parties once again."

But this liberalisation of foreign trade of which International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials are so proud, is not the success it appears. Although in theory any private trader can import goods, there are areas it is best to steer clear of. "The public monopolies have been replaced by private monopolies close to the people in power," admits an Algiers chamber of commerce employee. "There's no point trying to import food, medicines or building materials. Everyone knows there are people in those markets who can't be ignored and it's better, for your own safety, not to go near them."

French suppliers know that it is better not to try to have too many contracts and to deal with only one partner. "I challenge any Algerian trader you like to import French sugar or cement," continues the man from the chamber of commerce. "At best, he'll get a polite refusal from the supplier." As for the worst, Algerian "import-export" companies could tell you plenty of stories to give you food for thought. A young importer in Oran had a consignment of sugar declared unfit for consumption by port authorities, dishonestly of course. Others were less lucky: Algerians are convinced that some of the killings attributed to armed Islamic groups are linked to rivalries in international trade.

In these circumstances, where private interests are trying to take control of the economy with the complicity of international bodies that pretend not to know what is going on, the question of the privatisation of public enterprises is a very hot potato. "How can we privatise companies without undervaluing them? How can we ensure that they will not be broken up when sold?" a senior Algerian official wonders.

"It's right that the Algerian state should get out of activities where the private sector can perform better. But there's no need for total privatisation. There are public enterprises that are capable of surviving and operating in a competitive environment. We simply need the means to fight on equal terms with the private sector or international companies," is how they see it at the National Union of Public Businesses (UNEP), one of the few organisations still trying to defend the idea of a mixed economy.

More than 400 public economic enterprises (EPE) are involved, and the lack of information about privatisation plans is evidence for many observers of the tensions generated by the issue. Other public enterprises, local ones, have been sold, wound up or quite simply found no takers. This was the case of many hotels, some built by the architect François Pouillon. Potential investors, Algerian or foreign, were not interested, even for the symbolic price of a dinar. This lack of enthusiasm is explained by the scale of works required to renovate these establishments — but also because tourism in Algeria still very much depends on improving the security climate.

Destabilised by violence

SO MANY investors are pressing the government to sell such healthy companies as Air Algérie or even the oil company, Sonatrach. At the same time, attempts are being made to destabilise other equally profitable public enterprises. Such is the case, for example, of Saïdal, a pharmaceuticals company that is trying to revive a national industry in the face of keen competition from private importers. "This dynamic is disturbing," says a Saïdal executive. "Our company's chairman and managing director has been the victim of several terrorist attacks. Our production installations are regularly targeted, and we've been obliged to set up a security subsidiary to protect ourselves. And we refuse to believe that these attacks are the work of Islamic groups."

In plain language, this means the lobbies that want Algeria to continue to import medicines, rather than manufacture them, are behind the attacks. And destabilisation by violence which can easily be put down to terrorists is not the only weapon used by those who want to transform the country into an enormous trading post. It is less risky and more common to cast doubt on the management ability of the directors of public companies. The case of the Sider company, owner of the important Al Haddjar iron and steel complex in the east of the country, is a case in point (1).

On 21 February 1996, the company's directors were arrested, then in October 1997 sentenced to long prison terms. It has been established that at the time the team was arrested, there were no charges against them; only later did the judicial authorities try to bring charges, quickly ordering accounting and financial audits, the results of which remain open to criticism. Now the directors are hoping the Supreme Court will overturn the case or that they will get a presidential pardon. Given great prominence in the media, the case also highlights the fact that Algeria, which has officially adopted a market economy, has done nothing to reform its commercial and business law, as a former Sider executive in France confirms. "The prosecution file against those directors was empty, and the various complaints are based on the socialist code of enterprise management."

More scandalous still is that one of the accused is charged with making people call him "Charles de Gaulle", while another was described as a *harki* (2). No one is claiming that all of Sider's managers are irreproachable. However, it is clear to most observers that the chief traders involved in importing concrete reinforcing rods for the construction industry would like to see Sider decline or even wound up for poor business performance.

"Sider's 10 current directors, like those battling to keep their companies afloat elsewhere, know they can go to prison for using modern management methods that the courts continue to ban," comments Amar Ouahad, an economist. "Everything is blurred, and this inevitably has a negative effect on the performance of such enterprises. If the government wants to limit the influence of interest groups hostile to the EPE, it must legislate quickly to prevent a management team from being undermined on the pretext of archaic management rules."

Translated by Malcolm Greenwood

Fayçal Karabadji is a journalist

(1) See Nadjia Bouzeghrane, "Everyday life in Annaba", *Le Monde diplomatique* English Internet edition, October 1997.

(2) People who sided with the French in the Algerian civil war were known as "harkis".

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count on the authorities, in any form, to make changes. It was up to those at the base, the women themselves, to do something."

Malika promised herself that her daughters, Lamia and Nadia, would be more liberated than she had been and that they would enjoy all the rights of which she herself, although privileged, had been deprived. Especially the right to privacy. Her profoundest wish was that her daughters would no longer have to battle against the family at home and society outside it, and it seemed obvious to her that her children would not only share that aspiration but would be grateful to her for it.

So when Lamia, her elder daughter (who wants to become an architect), throws these ideas back at her saying they are "decadent and anti-Muslim" Malika is most upset and feels deeply unsettled. Mother and daughter feel they are not speaking the same language. "My mother thinks that, in order to be modern, I need to be like her," the girl says angrily. "Does she ever ask herself why she refuses to do the same things as her own mother? Has she ever asked herself what modernity is?"

Without giving them much credence, Malika follows the few initiatives taken from time to time, here and there, for the benefit of women. A petition was launched last February at the initiative of journalist Mina Zerrouk and her association, Femmes en communication, cautiously entitled "A million signatures for the rights of women in the family". Despite the urgent appeals published each day in different newspapers, they are far from reaching the million signatures they hoped for.

This initiative immediately resulted in a response from the women's section of Mahfoud Nahnah's Social Movement for Peace (MSP). This party, which defines itself as a moderate Islamist party and which has 17% women among its leadership, threatened to launch a petition to collect 3 million signatures "in order for Algerian women to regain their dignity as Muslims".

Family code

NOW that the MSP is part of the government and has a large representation in parliament, and with the various Islamist members forming almost one third of the assembly, it is clear that we should not expect any major amendments to the family code. Since the scales are weighted heavily in favour of the conservatives, who include more than just Islamists, no government would risk opening up an additional front, given the violent crisis which is already shaking the country. It would risk it even less on the question of women's rights, which continues to be regarded as a secondary issue.

Since violence erupted on the Algerian political scene all other matters have been relegated to second place. Among the 10 or so political parties represented in parliament only the Socialist Forces' Front (FFS) and the Culture and Democracy Party (RCD) are calling for the total repeal of the family code.

Although there is still so much to be done for women as regards the law, some advances have been made, even if they pass unnoticed outside the country. Some areas of freedom have been gained, probably irreversibly. Hence work for women, at home or outside, has become part of the mores and is no longer regarded as exceptional or marginal. One significant detail is that the number of cafés and businesses run by women (young and not so young) is increasing — a phenomenon which would have been unthinkable five years ago.

The increased deterioration in the economic situation is pushing more and more women on to the labour market. The proportion of female workers has thus grown from around 8% in 1987 to nearly 14% now. Rather than complaining how difficult their life is, almost all of them emphasise the growing influence they are gaining within their families, whether they are married or not. "We can have our say now in all the major decisions because it is often us who are bringing home the money for our brothers, fathers or husbands," they say proudly. "The men hang about the streets talking while we're doing the work. We feel less vulnerable now."

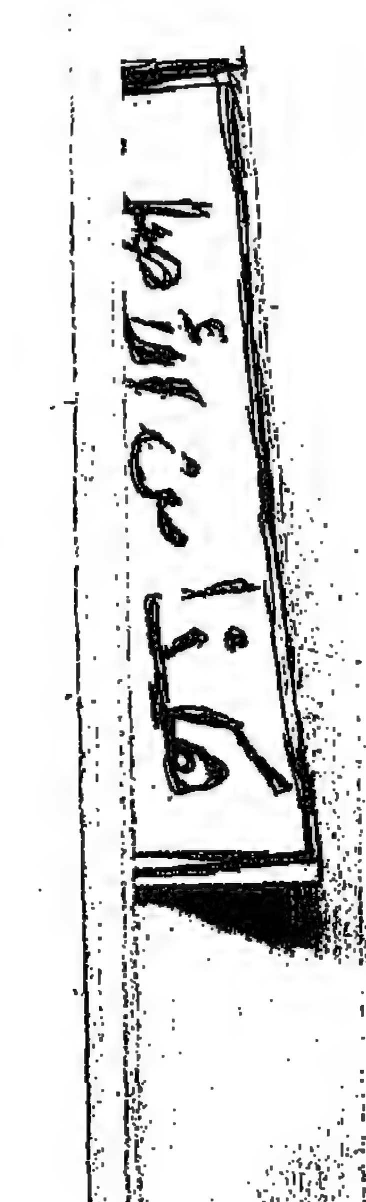
Nowadays one should judge by appearances less than ever before. Unlike 20 years ago, many of the women who work are no longer embarrassed to wear a veil. Most of them do so because the *hejab* hides their poverty and because it enables them to pass unnoticed in the street and so incur less unwelcome attention. They would still describe themselves as "modern", however.

"We need to know once and for all what modernity is" says Lamia, who has given up wearing a veil for the time being, to her mother's great relief. "The fact that I've chosen to do so doesn't mean that I've given up my search for authenticity," the girl adds, wondering aloud about all the contradictions which assail her and all the other girls of her age. "The fact is I simply don't know that a veil is the right answer. I don't actually want to lose a dimension of my personality."

If she had been the right age on 5 June last year, Lamia could have voted in the legislative elections. She is not sure whom she would have voted for, but in any case, as she made clear, "I wouldn't have voted for the MSP or for Ennahda, the two Islamist parties". The simple reason being that she mistrusts all politicians, "even if they support Islam. Islam is a culture not a policy", she adds with vehemence.

"If being modern means having a place in society, fine. I'm convinced, unlike my mother, that I still need to find my personality. She thinks I'm trying to go against her all the time, but it's not true. I'm looking for my own way, and I know I'll find it, somewhere between hers and that of the women who apply to the letter what the Islamic leaders say. They're just politicians."

Translated by Francisca Garvie



POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN

Basque nationalism undermined by ETA

Regional elections in Spain's Basque region, scheduled for October 25, will take place in an atmosphere of tension. This is as a result of the murder of several elected representatives of the ruling People's Party over recent months by the separatist Basque organisation ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom). But as well as killing hundreds of police officers, soldiers and civilians, ETA has been waging a campaign of violence against the Basque Nationalist Party — the leading party in the Basque Autonomous Community. These acts of violence will make next month's poll all the more important.

BY BARBARA LOYER

ON 1 December 1997 the Supreme Court in Madrid sentenced 23 leaders of the Basque separatist party, Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity), to seven years' imprisonment. They had been convicted of using part of their election campaign television time to show a video made by ETA. In the broadcast Herri Batasuna said it was giving air time to those who offered a real alternative for peace and democracy and a way out of the present political conflict and violence.

The video had shown three hooded, armed men calling for recognition of the Basque homeland, meaning the right to self-determination and territorial unity (including Navarre and the French Basque country). They demanded that "the Basque people" be allowed to "freely determine its future" and offered a ceasefire in exchange for an unconditional amnesty for all ETA members held in Spanish prisons and the departure of "Spanish armed forces" from the Basque country.

The next day the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), a Christian Democratic organisation which has a majority in the parliament of the Basque Autonomous Community and holds power in the Basque government, issued a statement condemning the prison sentences while making its opposition to Herri Batasuna quite clear. "The PNV has no reason to support Herri Batasuna, and even less to support its leaders. We get nothing but insults and threats from them and their political associates. What is more, the citizens of the Basque country are fed up with the arrogance and aggressive posturing of Herri Batasuna that accompanies the murder, kidnapping and extortion perpetrated by ETA and the urban guerrillas. Neither the PNV nor the great majority of the Basque people will support the call for a general strike on 15 December or any other action involving the use of force. It is high time for Herri Batasuna to break the link between political activity and the use of pressure, force and intimidation."

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On 6 and 7 December several PNV offices were firebombed by ETA militants. On the evening of 12 December, a People's Party town councillor in Renteria was shot dead by ETA. And on 9 January another town councillor was assassinated, this time in Zarautz.

Tens of thousands of people protested against these crimes. And all the nationalist and non-nationalist political parties in the Basque country, except Herri Batasuna, were represented on the demonstrations against terrorism. Meanwhile Itziar Aizpurua, a member of Herri Batasuna, boldly declared that "a people that struggles is sure of victory" (1).

So who exactly is struggling? And against whom? While Spain is confronted with other nationalist movements, especially in Catalonia and Galicia, the Basque nationalist movement is the most complex, for three reasons. First, Basque nationalist ideology is separatist and calls the existence of Spain into question. Second, the basic tenets of that ideology, which concern the limits of Basque national territory and the definition of the national community, are highly controversial and strongly disputed by part of the Basque population itself. Last, nationalist activists are deeply divided on the issue of armed struggle, and several members of the PNV have been assassinated by ETA terrorists.

Basque nationalists base their convictions on a particular reading of the history of their region. In their view, the Basque country is absolutely distinct from Spain in terms of both language and history. They claim that the Basques were self-governing up to and even beyond 1200, when their territory was annexed by Castille, and have continuously fought to preserve their own forms of government. Seen in this way, the Basque nationalist movement is a struggle for the retrieval of lost sovereignty. Basque nationalists refer to their nation as Euskadi, or Euskal Herria, an entity made up of seven "historic territories". Spain contains the three provinces of the Basque country proper (Biscay, Guipuzcoa and Alava) as well as the province of Navarre, which has the status of an autonomous community and its own government. The provinces of Labourd, Basse-Navarre and Soule are in the French *département* of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques.

The reality of Euskadi is more complicated. A good part of the population living in the "historic territories" does not want to be included in the Basque nation. That is the case of most of the Basques living in France and, above all, the people of Navarre. But Basque nationalists are convinced, on linguistic and anthropological grounds, that Navarre is the heartland of their nation. The Bascons of Navarre are claimed as the ancestors of the Basque people, as the mountainous north of Navarre is still partly Basque-speaking. And the 11th-century kingdom of Navarre is the only entity to have exercised political authority over all the territories to which the Basques now lay claim.

The great majority of Navarrese, however, consider their region to be quite distinct from the Basque country. The Union of the People of Navarre (UPN), founded in 1977 to oppose Basque nationalism, has become the largest political party in the region, winning 36.8% of the vote in the 1996 elections.

The stubborn determination to unite the "historic territories" in one nation may seem rather strange in view of the strength of resistance to it. (Even within the Basque country, the province of Alava does not support the nationalist cause.) However, the sense of belonging to a single nation was strengthened by the existence of a form of social organisation and similar institutions in the various "historic territories". These institutions, and the laws which they were responsible for applying, are a basic constituent of Basque nationalist ideology.

The *fueros* are the customs of the *ancien régime* applied by the local assemblies which the kings of Castille had to swear to observe in order to secure the allegiance of the Basque provinces. In Biscay, the ceremony of the royal oath took place in the city of Guernica beneath an oak tree that became the symbol of Basque independence. A person advocating reinstatement of the *fueros* is called a "fuerist", and the corresponding ideological movement is known as "fuerism". The *fueros* embodied the customs of each of the provinces, including Navarre. They granted the Basques of Guipuzcoa and Biscay special rights, in particular certain privileges normally confined to the nobility. The reference to the nobility as "universal" strengthens the belief that the Basque people had developed a unique tradition of democracy in which all men were equal under the law. The two Carlist wars in 1833-39 and 1874-76 resulted in the abolition of the *fueros*, and a political movement gradually emerged to demand their reinstatement. Initially, this demand was not incompatible with inclusion of the Basque country in Spain, but after a few years it took on a separatist connotation.

Sabino Arana (1865-1903) was the founder of Basque nationalist doctrine and of the PNV, a party which has propounded Basque nationalism since its creation in 1898. His main idea was to distinguish radically between the "Basque and Latin races" and to argue for the political independence of the former. In 189? Arana called for the establishment of a union of Basques "for the salvation of the common fatherland and the race itself" (2). He coined a new term, "Euskadi", to denote a Basque nation comprising territories in which history had taken rather different courses. Breaking with the vocabulary of the *ancien régime* Arana spoke of a "war of conquest" against Euskadi, of "Basque laws" rather than *fueros* and of "independence". Spain was depicted for the first time as a "foreign power" from which it was necessary to be separated. Separation was understood by his followers as a basic condition of progress for the Basque people, which was finally daring to assert its difference.

This ideology took shape against the background of the rapid industrialisation of Biscay, the main centre of the Spanish steel industry, which gave rise to a wave of immigration from other regions of the Iberian peninsula. Arana referred to this as "an invasion by Spanish socialists and atheists". At the outset, Basque nationalism was thus a racist, extreme-Catholic, separatist doctrine that postulated the existence of an ethnic community distinct from the Spanish and French, and portrayed the Basque problem as a conflict between nations.

The synthesis between fuerism and separatism is the core of Basque nationalist doctrine. Xabier Arzalluz, PNV representative at the Madrid Cortes in 1978 and currently the party's chairman, informed the deputies of the Constituent Assembly that the Basque country had reclaimed "its historic rights, the memory of which has never been lost. This has nothing to do with the ups and downs of the economy. It reflects an awareness of identity and history that is deeply felt by a large part of the population" (3). Many Spaniards cannot understand this obstinate determination to recover a status held under the *ancien régime*. For them *fueros* are simply old local customs with no special significance. But for Basque nationalists the terminology is important. Use of the term *fueros* means that the powers conferred

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Basque sympathisers at Deba mourn an ETA fighter killed in a police raid at San Sebastian



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by the granting of autonomy in 1979 are rights that pre-date the 1978 Constitution.

For the PNV, Article 1 of the Additional Provisions of the Constitution, which "protects and respects the historic rights of the territories with fueros", constitutes recognition of the "extra-constitutional" status of the *fueros* system (4). Basque nationalists portray the history of their country as proceeding independently of Spain. In this way they are able to distance themselves from any concern with the future of the Spanish nation. While the leaders of the PNV do not call on their followers to secede, Basque nationalists recognise no duty to Spain.

At the beginning of the 1936-39 civil war, the President of the Spanish Republic, Manuel Azaña, wrote the following words in his diary: "Once Bilbao has fallen, the Basque nationalists are likely to lay down their arms or even go over to the enemy. They are fighting neither for the Republic nor for Spain, which they detest, but for their own autonomy and semi-independence" (5). Following the swift fall of Bilbao in June 1937, the PNV did indeed negotiate surrender terms with Franco, who had been able to count on strong support from the Navarrese and Basque Carlists since 1936.

The right to self-determination was claimed with varying degrees of aggressiveness by all the Basque nationalist parties when the 1978 Constitution was being drafted. But there has been no head-on clash between the Basque people and their "Spanish oppressors". Rather, the conflict over the demand for self-determination is between Basques.

The fact that Euskadi is not a simple territorial entity is not in itself an obstacle to the existence of a Basque nation. More important is the fact that the concept of a Basque national community is of fairly recent origin and has never corresponded to reality. Right up to the 20th century each of the "historic territories" was concerned to defend its own autonomy against its neighbours. And the Basque national flag, the *Ikurriña*, which some people imagine goes back to the Middle Ages, was introduced by Sabino Arana at the beginning of this century, based on the Union Jack.

Basques can be divided into three national communities: those who call themselves Spaniards, those who think of themselves as French, and those who consider themselves only Basques. Two of the last four People's Party councillors targeted in the latest wave of assassinations had Basque names.

Nationalists are also faced with the difficult problem of integrating immigrants from other parts of Spain and those of their children who have not espoused the Basque cause. The assimilation of such people is currently a subject of heated debate inside and outside the nationalist movement.

From 1979 to 1991 the combined vote for the Basque nationalist parties always exceeded 50% of the poll in the Basque Autonomous Community. In recent years, however, the nationalists have not had an automatic majority. In 1993 a total of 685,674 votes in the Autonomous Community went to non-nationalist parties: the Spanish Socialist Labour Party, Euskadi Ezkerra, the People's Party, the United Left and Alava Unity. The combined vote for the Basque Nationalist Party, Herri Batasuna, Eusko Alkartasuna and Euskal Eskerra was 578,908, and there were more than 500,000 abstentions. If Navarre is included, the result is even more striking: the non-nationalist parties won more than 900,000 votes in 1993, compared with only 625,000 for the nationalists. And in 1996 the proportions were similar.

ETA is continuing to undermine the nationalist bloc by strengthening the ranks of its opponents. Since the beginning of its assassination campaign against the People's Party, membership of that party has grown. In 1990 the People's Party won six seats in the Autonomous Parliament. In 1994 it won 11 seats out of 75, as many as Herri Batasuna. Since Herri Batasuna refuses to sit in the Parliament, the Basque nationalists are faced with the possibility that a coalition could elect a non-nationalist speaker at the next regional elections in October 1998.

The main Basque problem is now ETA itself, and the organised violence of its zealots, who have combined to form a National Liberation Movement (MLNV). Murder, death threats, car burning, gutted shops and physical assault have become the daily routine of politics. Since 1988 all local parties except Herri Batasuna have adhered to a pact giving the *erzaintza* (the police force of the Autonomous Community) a free hand against ETA activists.

Public protest at the kidnapping of Miguel Angel Blanco reached unprecedented proportions. In Bilbao, a city of 900,000 people, the press estimated at 500,000 the numbers who demonstrated to demand that his life be spared (6). By contrast, the relatively calm reaction to the recent imprisonment of Herri Batasuna leaders by the Supreme Court in Madrid, which would have been unthinkable a few years ago, shows the extent of public disillusionment with that party.

Nevertheless, despite a steady drop in its influence, Herri Batasuna still obtains around 12% of the vote and represents the 500 jailed members of the armed organisation. Only the militants of the MLNV itself, acting within the separatist movement, can marginalise the proponents of continued political assassination. For this to be possible, other nationalists must provide them with convincing arguments. Significantly, the ELA, a nationalist trade union opposed to armed violence, is now seeking a rapprochement with the LAB, a nationalist trade union sympathetic to ETA, in order to find a way out of the present tragic deadlock.

Translated by Barry Smerin

(1) *Le Monde*, 7-8 December 1997.
(2) Sabino Arana Sabirdiar-Batza, *Obras Completas*, Bayonne-Buenos Aires, 1965, p. 1356.
(3) Constitutional Debates, Vol. I, Spanish National Assembly, p. 1760.
(4) *El Amejoramiento en el Parlamento*, 2 vol., Parlamento de Navarra, Pampelune, 1983, Vol. I, p. 171.
(5) Quoted in Manuel González Portilla, *La Guerra Civil en el País Vasco*, Siglo XXI, Madrid, 1988, p. 37.
(6) See Ignacio Ramonet, "Pays basque", *Le Monde diplomatique*, August 1997.

Turkish Cypriots dream of Europe

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NIELS KADRITZKE

"THE reason for the intervention was that Greece cannot be allowed to dominate this part of the Mediterranean": this is how Ankara explains its response to the 1974 Cyprus coup in which Archbishop Makarios was overthrown (1). The strategic issue came well before any concern for the fate of the Turkish Cypriots, as they soon realised. "Until 1974, we were needed. Once the Turkish intervention was over, we had served our purpose," wrote Turkish Cypriot politician Özker Özgur six months ago (2).

Mr Özgur is well placed to testify to the powerlessness of native Cypriots in the face of the new order. In 1994 he was deputy prime minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Head of the leftwing Turkish Republican Party (CTP), he joined the government to put through the opposition's main demand: to stem the tide of immigration from Turkey. But, as he puts it, "they gave me a drum, but other people kept the sticks".

Those "other people" are the generals in Ankara. Apart from the 35,000 Turkish soldiers they have stationed in Northern Cyprus, they control the police, the militia, the secret services and strategic sites like the water purification plants. The Turkish embassy has the last word on major civilian issues. It employs more people than most ministries and has with impunity assumed the right to grant the nationality of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus — which it is the only country in the world to recognise — to Turks and other foreigners. They're importing a population that's more useful and more submissive than the Turkish Cypriots," Mr Özgur says. Mass immigration from Anatolia is a subject that really raises the hackles of the Turkish Cypriots (3). Alpay Durduran, leader of the opposition party, Yeni Kibris (New Cyprus), estimates that 40,000 Cypriots have emigrated since 1974, most of them to the United Kingdom. He believes that 80,000 have remained, which means — since the 1997 census recorded a population of 160,000 — there must be equal numbers of natives and new arrivals. The fear is that the Turkish Cypriots will become a minority in their own country within a few years.

It is not going too far to call Northern Cyprus a Turkish protectorate. For two reasons: people feel at once protected, but also denied the freedom to make their own decisions. There is an ambivalence that most Greek Cypriots refuse to understand. Nearly all Turkish Cypriots remember the 1963-64 civil war which they have either lived through or been told about. It is the source of their deep need for security.

"1963-1964 will not be repeated" reads a poster as you enter the Turkish part of Nicosia. Rauf Denktash has built his political career on this trauma. He started the Turkish militias that fought against the Greek armed groups and then took control of the Turkish enclaves. He took advantage of the splits between Greek nationalists. As early as 1962 his aim was to "take advantage of the Greeks' mistakes to win our freedom to the full". An advocate of separatism, he refused all co-operation with the Greek Cypriots because that might result in the "Cypriotisation of the Turks", which he saw as their "extinction".

And indeed the "Greeks' mistakes" and Ankara's support made Mr Denktash the most successful man in Cyprus's political history. After 1964 he had his community under his complete control, was able to block a new constitutional compromise in 1973, and in 1974 began distributing the Greek possessions conquered in the North.

Historically, he was mistaken on just one point. Though they have no contact with the Greek part of the island, the Turkish Cypriots are more Cypriot than ever. Their increasingly minority position and the risk of being swallowed by Turkey has strengthened their sense of identity. This sense of identity is the common denominator of the North's opposition forces who accuse Mr Denktash of betraying his own ethnic community's interests by making them secondary to Turkey's. The primacy of Turkish Cypriot identity and interests have given rise to the following demands: a bi-zonal federation with a high level of autonomy and equal rights for the Turkish Cypriot part of the state; demilitarisation and the stationing of an international protection force with Turkish and Greek contingents; and membership of the European Union. Nowhere else in Europe will you find such convinced — or desperate — Europeans as among the Turkish Cypriots.

The strongest reason for wanting to join Europe is poverty. Turkish Cypriots have to compete for scarce work with day labourers from Anatolia who enjoy unrestricted entry. Alpay Durduran complains. "Only two branches of the economy are flourishing here, the Turkish mafia's casinos and the cheap universities that entice the offspring of rich Turks with strange English-sounding names". The trade unions and numerous trade associations are calling with great conviction for EU membership.

The pan-Cypriot trade union forum is an umbrella organisation for both South and North. It advocates an economic order that will allow people to work anywhere on the island. Unionists generally meet abroad because this year Mr Denktash has prevented Turkish Cypriots from visiting the South.

Most Turkish Cypriots have had enough of nationalism. They are just as fed up with the revival of pan-Hellenic feeling in the South, resulting from military co-operation with Athens. The opposition in the North regrets the Southern Cypriots' purchase of S-300 missiles and their failure to understand that more soldiers and arms mean even more repression for the Turkish Cypriots. But the Northern opposition's greatest fear is that the South will join the EU on its own and provoke Turkey to annex the North.

They are also worried that the Greek Cypriots are trying to seize the opportunity of membership to make their frustrated people swallow the bitter pill of division, and also to meet their security needs — since a "European territory" would be safe from Turkish attack. It could also dampen nationalist sentiment by making out that EU membership represents some sort of reunification with Greece.

Such a separation by stealth would doubtless not meet with international reservations. But, as always in the past 50 years, the Turkish Cypriots would be the first to lose.

Translated by Malcolm Greenwood

(1) Quoted by Mehmet Ali Birand, who has talked to all the 1974 protagonists. See Birand, *30 Hot Days*, Rustem & Brother, London, 1985, p. 3.
(2) *Avrupa*, Nicosia, 9 April 1998.
(3) The first colonists were the parents of soldiers who fell in Cyprus. They were given ownership titles and permanent residence permits on the principle of "land for blood".

Will the world catch Asian flu?

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tion of regional growth continuing at the same rate as at the start of the decade.

The simultaneous onset of falling currencies and shrinking markets in these countries effectively killed off any recovery that might have derived from the devaluations, thus opening the way for deflation. During the first six months of 1998, Thailand increased its exports by 25% in volume terms but actually earned less, because of the collapsing prices of the goods sold. At the same time, its imports shrank by an equivalent amount. The whole region has been affected by a deflationary logic, with "mechanical" repercussions that have come on top of deliberate strategies of price competition.

In economies where there are large inequalities in income, the collapse of external markets cannot be compensated for by increasing domestic consumption. In fact, the reverse is true. Shrinking overseas trade outlets will contribute to an accelerated contraction of domestic demand, with industrial profits and meagre wages disappearing.

Ideological myopia

IN ELEVATING the economy to an independent sphere with the supposed function of governing the whole of society, neo-liberalism has attempted to abstract it from its political and social underpinnings. It has chosen to see market relations as "natural" and, once they appeared to be in place in a country or region, it has reckoned them to be self-perpetuating.

This form of blindness, characteristic of totalitarian ways of thinking, consciously or unconsciously, explains how it was possible for the "experts" of the World Bank at the start of 1997 to place Indonesia — then under the declining rule of President Suharto — in pride of place as a country where development had been particularly successful.

The IMF has displayed the same blindness in its determination to impose on countries that sought its help the adoption of harsh macro-economic policies. Observers have accused it of exacerbating the movement towards recession: this is true but it is a superficial view — which is perhaps why it was taken up by leading neo-liberals such as Jeffrey Sachs (5). The behaviour of the IMF in Asia has been indicative of a vision of the world which is shared by all those who have sought to set up a benign dictatorship of capital away from the public gaze . . . A typical devotee has been Renato Ruggiero, director-general of the World Trade Organisation, who describes the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) as "writing the constitution for a single global economy" (6).

Student revolts and popular rioting of a variety strong enough to bring down the Suharto dictatorship were obviously not part of the IMF's plan, any more than the daily spread of social chaos in Indonesia.

Full-blown depression will not be limited to Asia. Now the Russians are experiencing the misery that accompanies the collapse of economic activity; and they will soon be followed by the peoples of the Ukraine and other ex-Soviet republics. Nor will the process stop there: Latin America will be the next victims of rentier and mafia-dominated global capitalism.

Three parallel tracks

AS IN THE 1930s, financial crisis and global recession are now progressing simultaneously along three parallel, interdependent tracks. The first is the contraction in production, demand and trade, and the fall in prices. This is what deflation is about. Unlike inflation, there are no known and easy remedies, because the fall in prices is a result of increased competition in a context of overproduction, excess stocks and productive capacity, as well as a reversal in business expectations. Deflation affects raw materials first and hardest. But it spreads through manufacturing like a disease.

This process has now been at work for over a year. Asian trade amounts to a third of world trade. This in itself was enough to discredit the idea of a purely "Asian" crisis. In the 1980s steps were taken by the big capitalist powers to bring Opec to its knees and lower the price of oil. Liberalisation and deregulation of the oil market are at the heart of the current collapse of prices and will prove to have far more destructive effects than in 1973 and 1978. In the case of Venezuela, Mexico and Russia, this is one dimension of their financial crisis.

The second track is through the astronomical increase in bad debt, both private and public, held by the banking system. When combined with political graft, the brutal spread of insolvency can bring the credit system to a halt, as in Indonesia and now in Russia. But the share of foreign banks in insolvent debt means that the process rapidly becomes global. Losses by internationally-exposed banks impact on increasingly vulnerable stock markets. But bad debt can also weaken the capacity of banks to provide credit to their own firms. "Credit crunch", as economists call it, is now a central feature of the Japanese recession, but other countries are not immune.

The third track is the one where the timing of events is hardest to predict, but where the effects are the most radical. It involves the close interconnectedness of the big stock markets and the transmission of funds from one to the another by increasingly nervous investors. The world of finance is hierarchical, and the key to the world stock market contagion is to be found in New York and Chicago. The state of Wall Street is obviously largely a function of the state of the US economy, which plays a central role in determining both the profitability of those firms whose shares are being exchanged and the mood of investors.

But profitability also depends on the state of the world economy. As it deteriorates, investors become increasingly sensitive to political events far removed from Wall Street. This was clearly shown on 4 August, when the markets fell 299 points — 3.4% — in a single day following disappointment with the new Japanese government's economic programme; and again in the fall that shook the markets on successive days in late August after the devaluation of the rouble and the political turmoil in Russia.

An end to euphoria

OVER most of the year, while Asia was moving into depression, financial markets in the West were booming. One reason for their buoyancy has been the "subjective" element of euphoria associated with the worldwide "bull" market in shares, of which Wall Street is both the front-runner and the pivot. In the months that followed the Thai devaluation, the World Bank estimates that around $110 billion drained out of the four countries most affected by the crisis. The combination of falls in interest rates and surging stock markets was directly linked to this massive influx of liquid assets seeking refuge in the financial institutions of the West, which in turn added to the euphoria among the "new investors" of the middle classes.

This phase is now over for two reasons: first, the end of the boom and the reversal of the business cycle in the US, and second, the fact that politics and economics are closely interwoven. The pillars of the neo-liberal capitalist order are beginning to crumble one after another. Each time one goes down, the rest are put under ever greater pressure. This is clear for Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, not to speak of Hong Kong and China . . .

Translated by Ed Emery

(1) See François Chesnais, "La face financière d'une crise de surproduction", *Le Monde diplomatique*, February 1998, and Diana Hochraich, "Crise financière et compétivité dans les pays d'Asie: au delà de la crise boursière", Les Etudes de CERI, no. 42, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris, June 1998.
(2) See "Asia: Social Backlash", *Business Week*, August 17 1998 and, particularly, the report on the real levels, and social effects, of unemployment in Japan.
(3) See Francis Pisani, "La fin des illusions pour le modèle mexicain"; François Chesnais, "Défense et illustration de la dictature des marchés"; and Ignacy Sachs, "Quelques leçons de la crise mexicaine", *Le Monde diplomatique*, respectively February 1995, March 1995 and April 1995.
(4) See Gabriel Kolko, "Mais exportez, donc! dit le FMI", *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 1998.
(5) Jeffrey Sachs, "High Time to Rein in the IMF", *International Herald Tribune*, Paris, 3 May 1998.
(6) On the Multilateral Agreement on Investment see *Le Monde diplomatique*, February and March 1998.

The spectre of bioterrorism

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risk appears to be quite small. As with nuclear weapons, the danger of accident is still greater than the danger of deliberate military use. States know that if they were to use biological weapons, they would expose themselves to retaliation of equal kind, or worse.

The US and Israel have told Iraq in no uncertain terms that any chemical or biological attack on their troops or territory will meet with a nuclear response, and in 1991 Iraq took good care not to use the weapons it had previously employed in the war with Iran against either country. On the other hand, the threat of bioterrorism, that is, the use of biological weapons for terrorist purposes in an urban environment, is much more frightening. There has been a disturbing build-up of events in this connection that may well be symptomatic.

The United States' national territory might have been thought to be out of bounds or immune to terrorism, but even it has been the target of a series of terrorist attacks since 1993, on the World Trade Centre in New York, Oklahoma City, the Olympic city in Atlanta, and others that might well have been no less disastrous.

And there is a perceptible escalation in the use of "unconventional" terrorist weapons. A number of incidents bear this out, the most spectacular so far being the Tokyo subway attack by members of the Aum Shinrikyo sect on 20 March 1995 (6). A week later, the Japanese police found a substantial quantity of botulin in premises belonging to the sect. Had it used botulin instead of sarin in the same circumstances, thousands or tens of thousands might have died.

Alongside this highly alarming tendency among religious sects or extremist ethnic groups, there is a recrudescence of terrorism by states or armed groups as an act of retaliation by the weak against the strong.

But the most frightening threat of all undoubtedly comes from a combination of these two tendencies, in other words terrorism in the form of state-backed political and military reprisals against civilian targets on the territory of the power in question. For example, in 1986, Paris was the scene of a campaign of terrorist attacks, thought to be orchestrated by Iran — then at war with Iraq — in response to French military support for Baghdad.

The prospect of terrorist reprisals of this kind explains why Washington strategists regard this type of threat as the Achilles' heel of American power. Thus the White House document on "national security policy in the 21st century" published in May 1997 accords second place in its strategic priorities to readiness to confront "asymmetric means" defined as "unconventional approaches to avoid or undermine our strengths while exploiting our vulnerabilities", the first priority being the need to maintain its armed forces at the necessary level to conduct two "major theatre wars" at more or less the same time.

The emphasis in American military and strategic documents on the principle of "preventive strikes" against "asymmetric threats" is very disturbing in view of the fact that they cite the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak in 1981 as an example to be followed, at the risk of causing a major nuclear disaster.

In point of fact, the Americans have already followed this example: in 1989 when they bombed the chemical factory at Rabta in Libya, in 1991 during the offensive against Iraq, when US forces bombed the sites of suspected chemical or biological weapons factories and, most recently the pharmaceutical factory on the outskirts of Khartoum — at the risk, in each case, of releasing deadly substances into the environment.

Rather than advocating "preventive strikes" would it not be better to look into ways and means of preventing such atrocities by addressing the social and political concerns of the potential users of these weapons?

Translated by Barbara Wilson

(1) *Newsweek*, 2 March 1998
(2) *Newsweek*, 8 December 1997.
(3) According to US sources, Iraq obtained its first cultures from an American mail order company.
(4) See Kendal Nezan, "Quand 'notre' ami Saddam gazait ses Kurdes", *Le Monde diplomatique*, March 1998
(5) Barry Schneider and Lawrence Grinter (editors), *Battlefield of the Future: 21st Century Warfare Issues*, Air War College Studies in National Security, 1995, available on the Internet. The relevant chapter is "The Biological Weapon: A Poor Nation's Weapon of Mass Destruction" by Lt. Col. Terry N. Mayer, USAF
(6) This act of madness had serious consequences — died and more than 5,000 suffered from the effects of gas poisoning.
(7) Bill Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, The White House, Washington, May 1997.

Conventions and Tables

■ The Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare was signed at Geneva on 17 June 1925. It found wide acceptance internationally but it had serious shortcomings: the research, production and export of weapons were not prohibited and the weapons themselves were so loosely defined that it was easy to circumvent the protocol. Also some signatory states, including the United States, the USSR, France and Great Britain had insisted on retaining the right of retaliation in the event of chemical attack.

■ The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, based on a joint American-USSR draft, was presented at the 26th meeting of the United Nations Assembly and adopted on 12 April 1972. The provisions on verification are inadequate. This Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons entered into force on 26 March 1975 and has been ratified by 140 states (including Iraq). Eighteen states have signed it but have not yet ratified it.

■ The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction was adopted in Paris on 13 January 1993. It introduces binding measures on verification, accompanied by procedures for inspection and investigation in the territory of states suspected of failing to fulfil their obligations. Very clear rules are established for the destruction of stocks of chemical weapons (new or old) and production facilities.

■ The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was signed in 1968, three years after the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water of 5 August 1963, and was ratified in 1970 for 25 years. The Non-Proliferation Treaty specifically prohibited the five powers officially possessing nuclear weapons — the United States, Russia (then the USSR), the United Kingdom, China and France — to pass material or information to other states, which in turn undertook not to produce bombs.

■ The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was signed by 149 countries on 24 September 1996. To enter into force, it must be ratified by the 44 signatories possessing nuclear facilities. On 6 April 1998, the only declared nuclear powers to have ratified the Treaty were France and the UK, though President Clinton expects it to be ratified by Congress this year. India has not signed. Until the tests in May 1998, it had been regarded as belonging with Israel and Pakistan to a group of countries on the threshold of becoming nuclear powers and it had argued during the negotiations that the comprehensive test ban should be linked to nuclear disarmament by the great powers.

THEY SEE YOU, BUT YOU DON'T SEE THEM

Big Brother is watching you

The cameras are everywhere. On streets and in railway stations. In banks, shopping centres and multi-storey car parks. The slightest movement can be observed at a distance on a screen. France alone is said to have a million closed-circuit video systems, including almost 150,000 in public places. Given the potential of the Internet, these systems raise the spectre of total visibility and total surveillance. How are personal freedom and civil rights standing up to this unprecedented form of social control?

BY ANDRÉ VITALIS

THE first video surveillance systems were installed in the early 1970s to assist in road traffic management and deter bank robbers. During the 1980s their use spread rapidly to public transport, shops, the workplace, leisure venues and the approaches to public buildings. A further step in this direction was taken at the beginning of the 1990s, when cameras were installed on public highways, in sports stadiums and on the streets of some cities.

This new form of surveillance aroused misgivings from the outset. In France, the CNIL (National Committee on Computer Data and Individual Freedom) proposed the first legal safeguards at the end of the 1980s. But the general public accepted the new technology, as a means of crime prevention. However, a survey carried out in 1996 showed that social acceptability varied according to the type of application. Only 9% of respondents considered the presence of cameras in car parks and shops as an invasion of privacy. On the other hand, 51% thought that showing pictures of a person taken in a public place without that person's consent was a serious violation.

The cameras involved are more and more powerful. Some have a full 360° range of vision. Others are fitted with zoom lenses that can read the figures on cash registers or car number plates at 300 metres. There are even "smart" cameras equipped with sensors that trigger alarm systems when incidents occur. The transmission of images over public telephone networks means that people can be kept under surveillance worldwide without regard to national frontiers.

Because of its intended purpose, video surveillance enjoys a high degree of legitimacy. Security is a basic human right. And the number of assaults on persons and property has been rising across Europe, although murder itself is still relatively rare. France had 23 times as many violent thefts in 1991 as in 1963, and eight times as many burglaries. In 1950 the police solved half the cases of theft. By 1993, the clear-up rate had dropped to 12.5%.

Hence the emergence in the 1970s of a demand for neighbourhood security which traditional policing methods seemed unable to satisfy. The answer was sought elsewhere, through private or municipal security services and technologies like video surveillance.

The statistics show that video surveillance can improve security. With 90% of banks now fitted with cameras, 50% of robbers are identified and arrested within two years. Thanks to video surveillance in the Paris metro, 83% of incidents are now detected, and arrests have risen by 36%. The use of this technology in department stores has reduced shoplifting by two thirds.

Sometimes, however, hi-tech security systems only push crime elsewhere. The criminals move to places without cameras. In Monaco, a city equipped with 60 video cameras fitted with zoom lenses, the crime rate is only 44 per thousand inhabitants. But the rate in the neighbouring French department of Alpes-Maritimes has risen to 130 per thousand, compared with a national average of 90.

Nor does video surveillance always produce the desired effect. Levallois-Perret, on the outskirts of Paris, has one of the highest concentrations of street cameras of any town in France. No fewer than 86 have been installed. Nevertheless, the crime rate rose sharply in 1996, with a steep increase in the number of thefts.

Once installed, video surveillance systems can be used for purposes other than those for which they were originally intended. The use of the cameras on Beijing's Tiananmen Square to identify and arrest demonstrators in June 1989 is a notorious example.

It is becoming apparent that the closed circuit systems installed in large department stores to counter shoplifting are now being used for staff surveillance. They have become an instrument for monitoring work and productivity. This is confirmed by the large number of instances in which video evidence is offered in court in alleged cases of wrongful dismissal. Video systems can also be used to monitor specific aspects of consumer behaviour. Detailed analysis of tiny movements and gestures enables stores to optimise the positioning of goods and devise the most effective shopping itineraries.

Video recordings of shoplifters can be used to build photo archives of suspects and persistent offenders. Currently, research is being conducted into software that can automatically identify wanted persons among the faces filmed in group scenes.

The development of surveillance software permits "objective" observation based on the detection of abnormal behaviour, atypical dress or specific ethnic origin. Unlike human operators, surveillance machines automatically record everything in their field of vision. Misinterpretation can have serious consequences.

Several surveys of systems installed in public places in France were published in 1995. They suggest the need to distinguish between two functions of video surveillance. The first is preventive and involves establishing a state that induces conformity to required behaviour patterns. The other is repressive, producing its effects only after undesirable behaviour has occurred.

The first function builds on long-established habits of discipline. For more than 300 years, self-control has been the means of promoting peaceful social behaviour. Norbert Elias, for example, has shown how the development of court society in the 17th and 18th centuries eliminated violent confrontation and helped to spread new standards of behaviour based on self-control to society at large.

Michel Foucault argues that suitable social behaviour was induced by the panoptic disciplinary mechanisms established towards the end of the 18th century. The individual was rendered docile and useful by enclosure in spaces such as schools, barracks, factories, hospitals and prisons. Individuals who are confined and under surveillance internalise the constraints of the confining authority.

But the established disciplinary mechanisms have been losing force since the 1950s. Modern life has given rise to areas such as airports and shopping malls, which the anthropologist Marc Augé calls "non-places". Here, the sense of personal identity is weakened and anonymity prevails. Video surveillance is an attempt to create modern panoptic mechanisms — being seen without seeing. In earlier times, these could only be established in enclosed spaces, but now they are being extended to open spaces frequented by increasingly mobile individuals.

Social conditioning

"WHEN we feel we are being watched by cameras," Paul Virilio observes, "we are undergoing a form of conditioning, even when no human being is monitoring the situation. A control relationship is established. Video surveillance is a form of behaviour control. It not only deters criminals. At the same time, it modifies the behaviour of all concerned." The key factor is that the person under surveillance must be aware of being observed. This awareness creates the disciplinary relationship and induces him to adopt the required behaviour pattern.

The effectiveness of the panoptic arrangement depends on the relationship of being seen without seeing. That is why video surveillance must always be obvious and is specifically drawn to the public's attention by signs such as "Smile, please, you're being filmed." Sometimes the individual is allowed to play the double role of observer and observed. In some apartment blocks, systems are being tried out which allow residents to watch the comings and goings of everyone in the common areas on their own television screens.

The second function of video surveillance is a new form of control. A remote, impersonal, automatic, largely invisible and inherently mysterious device enables the machine to create information and, if need be, initiate action. Here, the essence of control is manipulation rather than coercion, as if a distant hand were pulling invisible strings. The person under surveillance is reduced to an object of information. His records are contained in countless files, and everywhere he goes he leaves electronic traces of his passage. As if this were not enough, his activities are rendered even more transparent by video cameras that track his image. The subject himself remains ignorant of the processes and manipulation of data going on behind his back.

In the absence of any principles governing the use of the new technology, interference with individual freedom has become rife. Preoccupation with security leaves little room for concern with the basic right to come and go unobserved in public places.

In democracies, where freedoms are guaranteed by law, the loss of privacy entailed in the taking of pictures must not be disproportionate to the end in view. It may be justified in certain places where security is at risk, but it is not justified in all cases. In a Belgian secondary school, smokers were pursued right into the toilets, where cameras were installed to catch them in the act. Department store fitting rooms are kept under surveillance by hidden cameras to reduce theft. It has also been established that cameras installed on the public highway, or set up outside department stores to keep watch on the entrances, can see into adjacent houses and apartment blocks.

The CNIL has played a crucial part in countering these threats to individual freedom. It has campaigned to get the personal data protection rules contained in the Council of Europe's 1981 Convention extended to the new technology. Its efforts have been concentrated on surveillance systems installed in places open to the public. The European Directive on Data Protection, adopted on 24 October 1995, now places pictures and sound recordings of people on the same footing as textual records. They are all defined as personal data.

In June 1994 the CNIL published a recommendation containing four demands. The public must be informed of the existence of surveillance systems. The field of vision of the cameras used must not extend beyond the areas under surveillance. All pictures must be destroyed within a relatively short period of time, except in the event of judicial proceedings. Finally, people must be notified of the procedure for exercising their right of access.

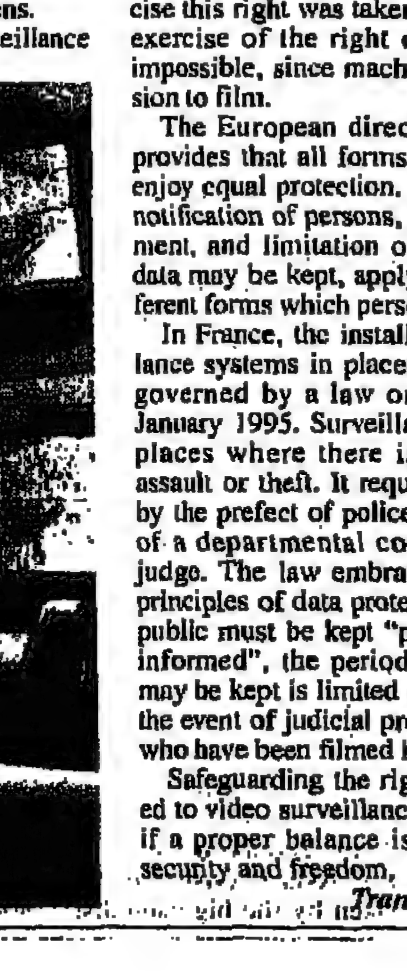
Some of these rules are difficult to apply. Right of access runs up against the problem of protecting the images of third parties in cases where the picture of a person wishing to exercise this right was taken in a group. Similarly, exercise of the right of opposition appears impossible, since machines never ask permission to film.

The European directive of October 1995 provides that all forms of personal data shall enjoy equal protection. The principles of prior notification of persons, data security, fair treatment, and limitation of the period for which data may be kept, apply equally to all the different forms which personal data may take.

In France, the installation of video surveillance systems in places open to the public is governed by a law on security adopted in January 1995. Surveillance is allowed only in places where there is a particular risk of assault or theft. It requires prior authorisation by the prefect of police, acting on the opinion of a departmental committee chaired by a judge. The law embraces several established principles of data protection. For example, the public must be kept "permanently and clearly informed", the period for which recordings may be kept is limited to one month (except in the event of judicial proceedings), and persons who have been filmed have a right of access.

Safeguarding the rights of persons subjected to video surveillance is absolutely essential if a proper balance is to be struck between security and freedom.

Translated by Barry Smerin



DON McPHEE

André Vitalis is a lecturer at the Media Studies Centre of Michel-de-Montaigne University (Bordeaux III). Co-author, with Eric Heilmann, of Nouvelles technologies, nouvelles régulations, a report published by the CNRS, Paris, 1996.

Free software for all

BY BERNARD LANG

BY VIRTUE of their immaterial nature, computer programs operate counter to normal commercial logic. Leaving aside development and conception costs, the marginal costs of their production and distribution are virtually nil. The development of the Internet has meant that this is even more the case. Major software publishing houses are suddenly faced with the competitive challenge of micro-firms emerging at the global level (such as the "start-up" firms in Silicon Valley) and of programmers offering their creations free to consumers. The companies are attempting to preserve their revenues and their monopoly grip on the market (1) by establishing controls over the duplication and standards of digital material.

This was the area dealt with by the Berne conference of December 1996, which attempted to create a framework of legislation covering intellectual property rights (2). This area has also generated intense technological activity geared to inventing procedures for marking and tracking electronic commodities, and mechanisms capable of preventing the reproduction of things which are, in their essence, reproducible. The energy that was previously devoted to creating those commodities is now being put into finding ways of preventing their duplication. This is detrimental to the efficient use of information technology (3) and is threatening the durability of its contents.

Of course, some would argue that this artificial re-establishment of scarcity is justified by companies' need for revenue in order to develop new technology, create new products and improve existing products, as well as by the costs of job creation.

But such arguments should be set alongside the fabulous profits of the firms in question: in 1997 Microsoft made a profit of $3.5 billion on a turnover of $11.4 billion, yet directly employed only 22,300 workers. Furthermore the extraordinary growth of the communications and information technology sectors have been driven by the Internet and the Web, which owe nothing, or very little, to the market economy (4).

For the software industry, the mechanisms of open competition are ambiguous. We have a situation in which commercial industrial software is distributed in forms that are directly usable by a computer (executable code), but without any of the information (source code and documentation) that would permit the user to modify it, adapt it to other machines and uses, make it more reliable, or correct the ever-present programming errors. Furthermore users' licences expressly forbid any such modifications.

This deprives client companies and organisations of control over the maintenance of their software, its time-durability and the possibility of adapting it to their individual needs.

The world scale of the market for software, the specific properties of immaterial commodities, and especially the legal or technological control of "standards" (particularly as regards the functional interfaces of software and the ways in which information is represented) are leading ineluctably to a concentration of monopoly power. Not only are client companies put into a state of dependency, but they also no longer have alternatives.

Since the suppliers have few competitors, they are even less motivated to satisfy their clients' specific needs. It is possible for a whole sector of technology to fall under the control of a single firm (or a small number of firms). Users in the fields of education and research are particularly concerned at this single-sourcing of available technology, and the resulting control of the flows of information which are so vital to researchers.

The ecology of ideas and technologies obeys the same laws as that of living beings. Single evolutionary solutions present a number of dangers. To have a small number of producing companies correspondingly diminishes the quantity, and especially the variety, of research and therefore also diminishes technological progress. The competitive element of technological evolution, which is essential in order to avoid technological dead ends, is either weakened or disappears. The absence of diversity makes the fabric of technology more vulnerable to attack: the threat of computer viruses is only one danger among many.

A recurrent theme of liberal thinking is that there is no alternative to the market economy. In the case of software, nothing could be further from the truth. Another path is already being traced.

A search for a different way of doing things was started in the early 1980s by Richard Stallman, at that time a researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This led to the creation of the Free Software Foundation (5) and a number of associated companies. Their intention was to create free software ("freeware") which, like ideas, would be available to all, in line with the philosophy of Pasteur, Jefferson et al. In order to avoid people laying economic claim to this software, Stallman turned the notion of copyright on its head by popularising a new kind of licence, known as the "general public licence", which protects a given piece of software from technical or legal attempts to restrict its use, spread and modification (6).

In tandem with the spread of such licences has come a sizeable and varied production of free software. Specifications and background information about the software have been made available, so that people can adapt or improve the software as they see fit, and redistribute it, with or without payment, and without any control over this redistribution by third parties.

True to the tenets of economic liberalism, this free competition has had an extremely positive effect on the quantity and quality of the software being produced. But the influence of the money economy has been much reduced.

The most visible product of this freeware culture is an operating system — the software necessary to the functioning of every computer — known as Linux. This was developed initially in 1991 on the basis of work done by a Finnish student, Linus Torvalds. Since then it has grown, benefiting from cutting-edge contributions from a supportive army of experts worldwide, linked via the Internet.

The development of Linux has been self-organising, like a huge enterprise without walls, without shareholders, without wages, without advertising and without revenue. To date, the number of Linux installations is estimated at between five and six million, with increasing evidence of applications in industry, too. The system's market share compares favourably with Apple's, and its growth rate is higher.

Various studies have shown that this software is in all respects competitive with commercial products. This is also confirmed by the extent of its penetration and infiltration in economic activity. The most significant example is undoubtedly the Internet, which would disappear entirely if this software were removed (7).

Technological and economic dependence on supplier companies is eliminated, or at least greatly diminished. The durability of the products, their evolution and adaptability, as well as the help available to users, are better guaranteed by the presence of a large mass of users and programmers than by the unpredictable strategies of large software publishing houses.

In technological terms, freeware is a credible and tested solution. Furthermore it encourages new areas of economic activity, and thus creates jobs. It does this by developing a range of services, by encouraging the development of complementary or competitive commercial products, and above all by fertilising technology-based businesses by providing resources that are free, independent, tested and of high quality (8). The development of freeware tends to replace a commercial publishing activity with a commercially-based servicing sector, which creates more jobs (often decentralised), and which is more competitive. Furthermore, given its greater technological fluidity, it encourages the creation of new companies.

At this point, it would be fair to ask whether the classic industrial environment is the most appropriate for developing the technologies of the immaterial sector. Consumer goods (films, music, novels) and production goods (software, scientific articles etc.) have very different economic and social roles. It is absurd to subject them to identical legislation and protective mechanisms. Economic liberalism is caught in a contradiction. It justifies weakening the sovereignty of individual states and the elimination of all kinds of barriers, including those designed to protect individuals, by the need for much greater economic fluidity. But, at the same time, it operates — via the abuse of copyrights and patents, non-respect of industrial standards, proprietary control of interfaces, industrial secrecy and the creation of monopolies — to create barriers that are extremely harmful to economic and technological progress and to the creation of useful jobs.

Translated by Ed Emery

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(1) See Ralph Nader and James Love, "Microsoft, monopole du prochain siècle?", (available in English, "What to do about Microsoft?"), *Le Monde diplomatique*, November 1997.
(2) Pamela Samuelson, "On authors' rights in Cyberspace", *First Monday*, Copenhagen, vol. 1, no. 4, October 1996, http://www.firstmonday.dk. See also Philippe Quéau, "Covert campaign against freedom of information", *Le Monde diplomatique* English Internet edition, February 1997.
(3) Richard Stallman, "Copywrong", *Wired*, San Francisco, July-August 1993, http://www.wired.com/wired/1.3/
(4) Hervé Le Crosnier, "L'économie de l'information dans le contexte des nouvelles technologies", Study Day on "Public domain information in the light of the Internet and digital technology", Paris, 18 June 1997, http://www.info.unicaen.fr/Herve/pub97/juin/
(5) http://www.gnu.org/fsf/
(6) FSF: GNU General Public Licence (GPL), http://www.gnu.ai.mit.edu/copyleft/gpl.html
(7) Keith W. Porterfield, "Information Wants to be Valuable", *NetAction Notes*, no. 26, 3 September 1997, San Francisco, California. http://www.netaction.org/articles/freesoft.html
(8) Freeware is used in a number of applications where reliability is a critical factor: the control of experiments launched aboard the Nasa space shuttle, industrial robots (Lectra-Systèmes, France), operational control of passenger lifts (Fujitec, Japan), command systems in the US military, fuel distribution (Schlumberger, USA), etc.

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Tel: 00331-42172000; Fax: 00331-42172100
Website: http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/

Published by Guardian Publications Ltd, 164 Deansgate, Manchester M60 2RR

Asia's Migrant Workers Forced Home

Keith B. Richburg in Bangkok

BUS No. 929 to Amnajcharuen province was two hours late leaving the Northeast station, but the passengers hardly seemed annoyed or even in much of a hurry. They had an eight-hour drive ahead and little to look forward to at home in their villages — no jobs, no future, children needing money for school, wives needing money for the household, elderly parents needing money to survive.

Pan Ngamsukee has been making the trek from his village to earn money in Bangkok since he was 12; he's now 40, and has never seen it this difficult to find work. Ekachai Thubthaisong is 50 and has been coming to Bangkok about as long, working on construction sites since he was 20. And Wad Boonmanad, just 27, has a young child due to start school soon, and he's heavily in debt. "I'm worried," he confides, staring solemnly out the bus window.

The three men, friends from the same small village in the northeast, came to Bangkok together after spending a few weeks at home to help plant the family rice fields. They came with 200 pounds of rice between them, and expected to pick up their old jobs as day laborers on city construction sites and earn enough money to send back to the village and pay off old loans.

But Thailand's economic crisis meant that this year, construction in Bangkok has all but ceased — and there's no work for migrant laborers like Pan, Ekachai and Wad. So they sold their rice, bought bus tickets home and were sitting on the hot, stuffy orange bus — crowded with other newly unemployed workers — waiting to start a long journey back to an uncertain future.

"I have to find a way to make money," Pan said. "People in the village work in the rice field, so they have food. But they depend on the people working in Bangkok to send cash."

The scene is being repeated every day around Thailand, and around much of Asia, as the economic crisis that began last year has sent unemployment soaring. Factories have closed, new construction has stopped, and even businesses that are staying open are laying off workers. The vast majority of the newly unemployed are migrant workers from rural areas, the manpower and the backbone of the decade-long Asian economic boom.

Thai government officials estimate that unemployment here has already topped 2 million. Of those, 1.3 million are believed to be villagers who were working in the city, and most of those, at least 1 million people, have already returned home.

Migrant laborers built Asia's gleaming high-rises. They weaved the textiles and stitched the sneakers and assembled the automobiles and slapped together the plastic dolls that fueled what was then called the Asian economic miracle. But with the region's economy in an unprecedented downward spiral, these laborers are the first to be laid off.

The result has been a dramatic reversal of the traditional village-to-city migration pattern that transformed Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries from predominantly agricultural to mainly industrial societies in one generation.

"The migration patterns have reversed in Thailand," said Kul C. Gautam, the East Asia and Pacific regional director for UNICEF. "Before, people went from the countryside to the big city, for the bright lights, the jobs and so on. Now it's the other way around. People are going back to the villages. That is putting pressure on the village economies. They had grown used to these people being in the cities."

"There are no jobs in the villages," said Graziano Battistella, director of the Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila, which tracks the movement of people in the region. "Unless these people have some entrepreneurial skills, or some cash, it's very difficult to know if there will be any job creation . . . But from a government's perspective, [jobless] people in the villages are much less visible than people in cities."

Asia's new migration is not just confined inside national boundaries; indeed, the economic crisis has created a mass movement of people across the region, reversing the traditional migration paths. During the boom years of the 1980s and early 1990s, workers from the poorer Asian countries, such as Indonesia and particularly the Philippines, flocked legally and illegally to wealthier countries such as Malaysia and South Korea, and also to Hong Kong, to make up for acute labor shortages.

Foreign workers in Hong Kong built much of the new $20 billion airport. Migrant labor built Malaysia's huge road network and its high-tech cyber-city, Kuala Lumpur, as well as Japan's Winter Olympic Village in Nagano. And tens of thousands of Philippine domestic helpers have fanned out through Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan. But when the economic downturn hit in the middle of last year, among the first — and most popular — acts of governments around the region was to send migrant workers home, restrict the entry of newcomers and begin cracking down on illegal labor. Those once welcomed are now largely scorned.

"We planned to go to Bangkok, to work as housemaids," said Rai. She is an 18-year-old woman from Laos, Thailand's poor and isolated neighbor, and is staring forlornly from behind the metal bars of the small cell at the Singkorabhom district police station, in Thailand's northeastern Surin province. "We are poor at home."

Rai's home is an impoverished village in Laos's southern Champasak province. In search of jobs and a better life, she and a group of friends — five females, two males — took a boat across the Mekong River, caught a bus in Ubon Ratchathani and made it as far as Surin before Thai police apprehended them and nine other illegal Laotian migrants.

In better times, when work was plentiful and the Thai economy was expanding, police might have turned a blind eye to this group of illegal job-seekers.

Since the crisis began, Thailand has deported an estimated 250,000 migrants — mostly Burmese. South Korea granted an amnesty for illegal foreigners who left voluntarily — meaning they would face no fines or jail terms — and about 50,000 did so. Malaysia, another crisis-crippled country, deported about 50,000 Indonesian migrants, out of a total migrant worker population of roughly 2 million, legal and illegal.

In 1980, a total of 1 million migrants worked in Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Taiwan. In 1997, that number had grown to more than 6.5 million.

Still, most of the migration — and the new reversal of movement — has come not across borders but within countries. "International migration is the one that gets the attention," said Battistella in Manila. "But internal migration is the much wider phenomenon."

The influx of returning migrants also brings with it a host of new problems and urban pathologies previously unknown, or at least rare, in these remote villages. There is concern that more people living in crowded conditions is leading to increased tension in families — more spousal abuse, more child abuse. Crime is on the rise. And experts worry about a new spread of the human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS.

"There's been a massive return of people to rural areas who had been living in cities," said Robert Bennoun, a UNICEF official who is also an adviser to the U.N. program on AIDS. "The hospitals are filling up . . . People are going back with HIV at a time when the health services are particularly stretched."

Advocates for Thailand's poor and newly unemployed have suggested the government has an ulterior motive in its strategy of asking the unemployed to return to their villages: to prevent the buildup in the capital of a critical mass of unemployed.

"The recent government policies to help the poor, such as loans for the unemployed, [are] only to delay the social unrest," said Suriya Thongnuead, an adviser to the Forum of the Poor, an advocacy group. "It doesn't help solving the real problem of poverty among the majority. I can't see any way out for the unemployed workers who go back to die in the village."


Dej Boonyong working in rice fields in Sai, the Thai village she returned to after losing her job in Bangkok PHOTO: NANCY ANDREWS

Oil Price Drop Hits Venezuela Hard

Serge F. Kovaleski in Caracas

WHEN worldwide oil prices crashed earlier this year, so did Raul Gonzalez. As Venezuela's petroleum-dependent economy started to sputter, the 29-year-old father of two was laid off from his coveted $14-a-day job at a General Motors assembly plant in the town of Valencia near here, along with 1,200 other workers. Today, Gonzalez works alone on the teeming downtown streets of the Venezuelan capital, hawking cigarettes, cheap sunglasses and car floor mats to support his family.

"This whole thing has been like being shot and not wearing a bullet-proof vest," Gonzalez said. "When oil died, everything in Venezuela went with it in a free fall, including myself and my wife and young children, unfortunately."

As crude oil prices hover at their lowest point in more than a decade, Latin America's fourth-largest economy is stumbling badly. The sudden downturn, which follows a period of hardy economic growth, has caused widespread layoffs, brought the country to the edge of recession and rendered it more vulnerable than any other Latin American nation to the financial contagion from Asia and Russia.

Although the government and Congress have recently undertaken emergency measures to address the crisis, they have not been able to arrest the country's economic slide, whose symptoms include roaring inflation, lending rates of over 70 percent and a sharply overvalued currency. Perhaps most ominous, the downturn has deeply unnerved foreign investors, who until recently were touting Venezuela as one of the region's more promising emerging markets.

The sense of uneasiness among investors has been heightened by the effects of the economic turmoil on the country's presidential campaign. Recent polls show that Hugo Chavez, 43, a former lieutenant colonel and radical populist who led a failed coup six years ago, holds a commanding lead in the campaign for December's election. Among his unorthodox proposals are plans to freeze foreign debt payments and slow the pace of privatization, a key element of market-oriented economic reform.

The specter of a Chavez presidency, coupled with the economic quagmire in this nation of 23 million people, has sharply reduced investment by foreigners and Venezuelans alike; some investors have already begun to flee the country.

"People are afraid. Investments have ground to a halt while people wait to see what happens politically and economically," said Olga Vieira, director of operations for the British Chamber of Commerce in Caracas.

Venezuela's precarious economic condition has serious implications for South America, because it could pressure other countries to devalue their currencies — a move that would usher in higher inflation rates — as well as further sour investors to the region as a whole. This month, fears that Venezuela was on the verge of a large devaluation after Colombia devalued its peso, rolled financial markets from Mexico to Madrid as investors worried that it might trigger a domino effect across Latin America.

In contrast to Chile, Argentina and Mexico, Venezuela has been slow to adopt economic reforms, analysts say. By most reckonings, Venezuela — which relies on oil for 60 percent of government income and 80 percent of export income — is again paying the price for not moving more aggressively to buffer its economy against petroleum shocks through diversification.

"Countries like Mexico have been more defensive. Venezuela's strategy has been to delay difficult fiscal decisions in the hopes that the oil market would recover," said Robert Berges, Latin American strategist at Merrill Lynch & Co. "What they are trying to do now is find ways to finance their big fiscal deficit."

Antonio Herrera-Vaillante, vice president of the Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce, which represents 90 percent of foreign investment in this country, said: "This is the process emerging from a populist, socialist state where almost everything was subsidized by oil revenues. People had been protected by a petroleum cushion, and all of a sudden it is not a cushion but a little rag."

"Facing reality," he added, "has been one of the biggest problems for Venezuela."

The government of President Rafael Caldera has been forced to tighten its belt severely as oil revenues have plunged 35 percent this year. To stanch a budget deficit estimated at 5 percent of gross domestic product, the administration has so far cut more than $4 billion from public spending — a large part of it from the state oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela. Recently, Congress passed a battery of fast-track economic reforms that, among other things, will enable the government to issue up to $1.4 billion in new debt to help cover the shortfall.

But critics contended that the reforms mostly address long-term issues and that there is little investor interest in purchasing debt from emerging markets. At the same time, administration officials acknowledged that the economic initiatives should have been implemented much earlier.

The government suffered a significant setback recently when its attempts to sell its money-losing aluminum production complex, valued at $1.55 billion, unraveled for the third time when the only bidder pulled out of the process, citing instability in world financial markets.

A Little Night Music

Jack Sullivan

STEPHEN SONDHEIM
A Life
By Meryle Secrest
Knopf. 461 pp. $30

URBANE, complex and utterly contemporary, Stephen Sondheim's Broadway musicals are greeted with a high seriousness normally reserved for novels and plays. Their very existence is a mystery: How could this ostentatiously intellectual artist, a poet of ambivalence and self-doubt, succeed in a genre widely regarded as commercial entertainment?

One answer, Meryle Secrest suggests in this shrewd, vibrant biography, is that Sondheim burst on the scene at just the right time, when the traditional musical had run its course and Broadway was desperate for something new and provocative. Sondheim also had great luck in his mentors and contacts, including Cole Porter, Leonard Bernstein, Jerome Robbins, Humphrey Bogart, Arthur Laurents and, especially, Oscar Hammerstein, his surrogate father.

But his main asset, aside from genius, was an extraordinary "single-mindedness" that allowed him to endure dozens of failures before the big break of West Side Story, and during the '80s, when accountant-mentality producers and an audience addicted to glitzy special effects abandoned serious theater.

Sondheim describes himself as a "nice Jewish boy from the nineteenth century," insisting that his life is devoid of intimacy and color. But Secrest, who has also chronicled the lives of Kenneth Clark, Salvador Dali and Leonard Bernstein, finds plenty of juicy material even in Sondheim's aloofness.

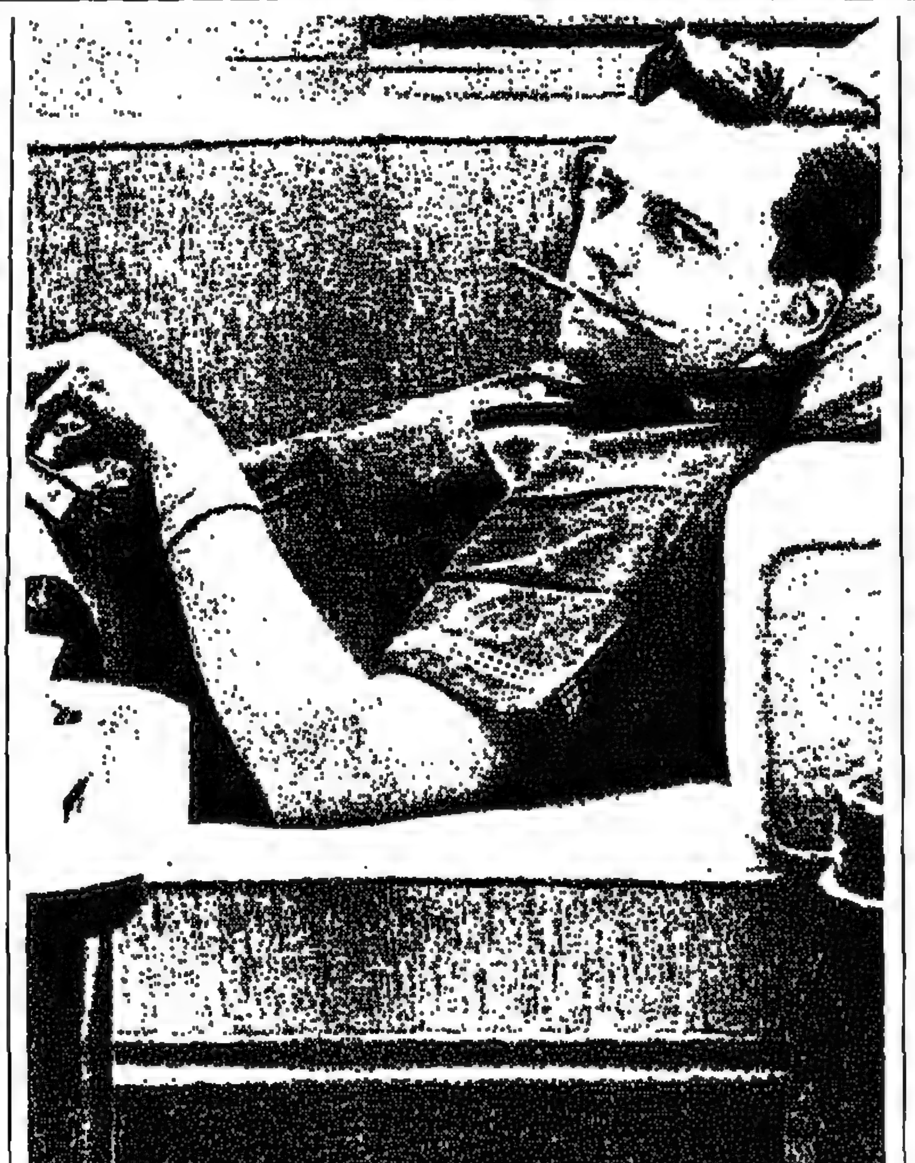
Raised in the genteel upper West Side of Manhattan in the '30s, he was abandoned by his father, who took up with another woman, and was raised by his angry fashion-designer mother, Foxy, who alternated between incestuous seductiveness and a hostility summarized by a letter to her son before her open-heart surgery: "The only regret I had in life is giving you birth."

No wonder Sondheim, the inspiration for Anthony Shaffer's Sleuth, was obsessed by puzzles, conundrums and detective stories. "The puzzle was a metaphor," writes Secrest, "a reassurance he desperately needed that there really was a path through the maze, that magical secrets waited to be revealed." Music, too, became a way of making order out of the chaos of his parents' failed marriage, music infused with brilliantly artificial word games, pristine Ravelian harmonies, and elaborate canons and fughettas.

Yet Sondheim's art does not resolve: Company, Follies, Sweeney Todd, Merrily We Roll Along, Sunday in the Park With George, and even A Little Night Music move toward ambivalence and regret, the unraveling of ideals and relationships, even though their exquisite design suggests perfection and closure. Each song has a secret tension, what Sondheim calls a "subtext" that leaves the audience "something to discover . . . like body in wine."

Sondheim's entire life is full of paradoxes. An inveterate New Yorker, he scored his biggest critical success in London, a culture saturated in the verbal subtleties of Shakespeare and Shaw; a cerebral puppeteer isolating himself in a house of games, he writes conversational songs in an entirely communal genre because he can "only collaborate."

The real drama in this richly textured biography emerges from these collaborations. The dizzying ups and downs of Sondheim's behind-the-scenes experiences with Harold Prince, David Merrick, Zero Mostel, James Lapine, Bernadette Peters and countless others are exhilarating, excruciating and often hilarious, providing enough drama for half-a-dozen biographies. Sometimes Sondheim's ripostes resemble the quick, cynical brilliance of his lyrics: When actor Larry Kert yells during a tense rehearsal in Company, "Who do I have to screw to get out of this show?" Sondheim answers, "Same person you screwed to get in."



Sondheim in 1961 PHOTOGRAPH: HANS NAMUTH

Because Sondheim's shows are bursting with ideas, the smallest behind-the-scene dispute becomes illuminating. In the 1959 Gypsy, Sondheim refused to write an ending to "Rose's Turn" because "a woman having a nervous breakdown should not get applause." He changed his mind when Hammerstein insisted that if the audience could not release themselves after this overwhelming song, they would miss the rest. Ultimately, Ethel Merman made her bows part of her devastating mad scene, creating the quintessential Sondheimian moment: In playwright John Guare's words, "when you realize the ground has gone out from under you. That's what Steve understands."

Often the ground goes out under Sondheim and his collaborators. Secrest's accounts of flops, from Anyone Can Whistle in 1964 to Getting Away With Murder in 1996, are as riveting as the success stories. Most traumatic is the disintegration of Merrily We Roll Along in 1989, a confluence of economic, medical and public-relations disasters that caused Sondheim to lose not only some of his dearest friends but his greatest collaborator, Harold Prince. Comparing the haunting beauty and musical unity of Merrily with its shabby demise, one wonders how anything of substance succeeds on Broadway. Clearly, its champions are motivated not by anything remotely rational but by obsessive love.

Secrest gracefully interweaves personal with artistic material, delivering a first-rate history of Broadway in the past 40 years simply by detailing Sondheim's central role in it. She doesn't shrink from discussing unpleasant personal issues such as Sondheim's blocked romantic feelings for Lee Remick or his discomfort with his homosexuality, but she refuses to indulge in the tell-all gossip that coarsens so much contemporary biography.

Often, Secrest allows her subject to speak — an admirable tactic since Sondheim is a witty, incisive observer: West Side Story is "about techniques, not about people"; Maurice Ravel is responsible for "most popular music that has been written in the twentieth century, including his own." Sometimes Sondheim can be cruel, as in his quip that Hammerstein was a man of limited talent and infinite soul, Rodgers the reverse. His view of Company, more trenchant than any critic's, crystallizes his message: "to be emotionally committed to somebody is very difficult, but to be alone is impossible."

The most poignant Sondheimian paradox is his view of himself both trapped and liberated by the musical theater. An artist in a commercial world, he is "serious in an art that is hardly worth being called one." Yet that same not-so-smart form is life-giving, as necessary as breathing: "There's something magical about it that just does not exist in films and television. It's not about being smart, it's about being alive."

Birth of an American Dilemma

Jonathan Yardley

MANY THOUSANDS GONE
The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America
By Ira Berlin
Harvard. 497 pp. $29.95

IT IS scarcely an exaggeration to say that keeping up with the historiography of slavery in North America has become a fulltime job. The flow of new trade and university-press books alone is more than anyone except the specialist can attend to, not to mention the ocean of dissertations, theses and papers that never make it beyond a narrow professional readership. It may well be that within the broad area of the humanities there is no field where more exciting or important work is now being done.

Not merely is it an exciting business, it is a tricky one, so anyone following it must be on constant alert. Interest in the subject arises not merely from an urge to correct the historical record — which until a quarter-century ago was riddled with inaccuracy and what can only be called racism — but in some instances from an urge to rewrite that record in order to suit ideological fashion in a profession many of whose members are still under the sway of the 1960s. At times it is difficult to tell whether what one is reading is historical truth or wishful thinking.

No such difficulty exists with Many Thousands Gone. Though Ira Berlin writes with discernible rancor about Southern planters (he calls them "grandees" and describes them as "a new class of men whose appetite for labor was nearly insatiable"), otherwise he keeps his politics and ideology to himself. Today's correct historian can be as guilty of over-simplification as yesterday's apologist for slavery, but Berlin scrupulously resists any such temptations. His emphasis is on subtlety and complexity, as opposed to the neat "formulation of history as written."

His subject, as indicated in his subtitle, is the first two centuries of North American slavery, from the establishment of bondage in the early 17th century until the American Revolution of the late 18th century and its aftermath. It was a period in which "the lives of slaves changed radically," yet — by contrast with the height of slavery in the 19th-century antebellum years — it is one about which we know relatively little. Not merely that, but we tend to assume that slavery was a stable condition during this period, just as we make the same assumption about antebellum slavery; in both cases, we are wrong.

What is surprising about this is that everything else in history teaches us that change is the one constant of human existence. How could we have imagined that the lives and conditions of American slaves, or their relationships with their owners and the legal authorities, could have been otherwise? Why do we think that slavery can be fit into neat pigeonholes when we know that almost nothing else can be so easily categorized?

What this says about American attitudes toward history, and/or American attitudes toward race, can only be guessed at; suffice it to say that it probably is nothing flattering. But according to Berlin the history of the first two of slavery's three centuries in North America reveals nothing so much as change, ambiguity and "messy, inchoate reality." For this reason alone his book has great value and importance; it is also lucid, measured and entirely persuasive.

Berlin's focus is on the development of slavery in four areas: the North; the Chesapeake; the "coastal lowcountry" of South Carolina, Georgia and north Florida; and the Mississippi Valley of Louisiana, Mississippi and west Florida. He traces changes from "societies with slaves" (in which "slaves were marginal to the central productive processes") to "slave societies" (in which "slavery stood at the center of economic production, and the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations"). These changes were not always simple and usually were anything except linear; though Berlin makes a good deal of sense out of them, the reader must be prepared for more uncertainty than most find comfortable.

Though the trend in most places was away from societies with slaves and toward slave societies — in particular, and most obviously, in the plantation regions — this was not a neat process, because it ran parallel to a tentative and incomplete loosening of slavery's grasp: Though their numbers were small, some blacks were able to gain their freedom as a result of urbanization, revolutionary egalitarianism and other influences.

Indeed, for all the oppression it documents, Many Thousands Gone can be read not as a chronicle of denial and enslavement but as evidence of the irresistible impulse for freedom. In this sense Berlin's book is an affirmation, not merely of the fortitude and dignity of the slaves (a matter of grave concern to many of today's historians) but of the capacity of American democracy — despite its shortcomings — to live up to its promises. In this sense Many Thousands Gone is an expression of optimism, though Berlin himself might not necessarily prefer this interpretation.

On another level, though, this book is a damnation of white America. Berlin tends to the view, which has been gaining currency among historians (and geneticists, anthropologists and others) that race is artificial, a "social construction" or, as Berlin himself argues, a "historical construction" that "only exists on the contested social terrain in which men and women struggle to control their destinies." This is slippery ground, but Berlin makes a strong case that race in America as we now understand it arises from "the practice of equating bondage with blackness," that, as the perverted slaveholders' interpretation of the Age of Revolution put it, "If indeed all men were created equal and some men were created slaves . . . then, perhaps, those who remained in the degraded condition of slaves were not fully men after all."

Berlin's analysis cannot be "proved," but it is persuasive. It says that even as white America was beginning to permit black American freedom, it was erecting an elaborate system of prejudices under the rubric of "race" that were designed to keep blacks in their place. American history offers precious little evidence to refute this.

World in need of fire break

Larry Elliott on a plan of action to limit the damage of the current crisis

AS EVERY child knows, the Great Fire of London began in Pudding Lane and raged uncontrollably for days. When the flames died down, large parts of London were a smouldering heap of ashes.

With the benefit of hindsight, the Great Fire was not a disaster. London recovered quickly and the authorities learned from their mistakes when it came to rebuilding the city.

That was not the way it seemed in September 1666 as the flames swept through the streets of London. The sense of helplessness and panic will have been familiar to those at the sharp end of the current financial turmoil.

The solution arrived at in 1666 was to call in troops to blow up blocks of houses, creating a fire break. Once that was done, the fire burned itself out. Can something similar be done in the world's financial markets today?

The short answer is that something similar can be tried — and almost certainly will be tried — but there is no guarantee of success. Globalisation has meant that the linkages between economies are so strong that the creation of *cordons sanitaires* is not easy. But there are four countries essential to managing the financial crisis: Brazil, Hong Kong, Japan and the United States.

Brazil raised interest rates to 50 per cent on Friday last week in an attempt to put a halt to capital flight and head off a disorderly devaluation that would have ramifications not just for Argentina and Mexico but also for the US and European Union. The US banking system is twice as exposed to Latin America as it is to Asia; the combined exposure of European banks is even higher.

Reports from Washington last weekend suggested that the US Treasury and the International Monetary Fund were trying to patch together a rescue plan. Having screwed up badly in Russia, the West must get it right in Brazil, a country which at least has a functioning government and a system of (little-used) capital controls that could be beefed up to deter speculation.

The willingness of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government to tighten monetary policy and cut spending should be met with a response from Washington. But building a firewall will not come cheap: a fund of at least $25 billion will be needed to tide Brazil over.

Hong Kong has taken a different route. In effect, the authorities have defended the currency peg with the US dollar by nationalising the stock market. What was once the darling of free-market commentators has proved to be the biggest interventionist of all — pushing up prices and causing real damage to the hedge funds (which are also reported to have taken a battering in Russia).

The Hong Kong monetary authority is following up this blatant (and laudable) tampering with the market mechanism by regulating short selling and placing restrictions on the use of margin calls.

Hong Kong's chances of clinging on to its currency peg depend to a large extent on what happens to China, and that in turn will be influenced by what happens in Japan. Amid all the stock market turbulence of the past month, it has been almost forgotten that Asia is gripped by a serious depression and there is no prospect of a recovery until 2000, at the earliest.

The UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, as chairman of the Group of Seven leading industrial nations, is flying to Japan for talks this week, and it is clear that the sooner the world's second economy can be dragged out of its prolonged slump the better. Whether the he can provide anything other than moral support remains to be seen; most of the solutions to Japan's problems are in its own hands.

THE authorities must staunch the flow of corporate bankruptcies and stimulate consumer confidence, but this is proving difficult. With prices falling, money is becoming more valuable and consumers are hoarding it rather than spending it. Printing money in order to push up prices may be the only way out, because that would reduce the incentive to save.

Finally, there is the United States. As in 1973-74, a global economic crisis has come at a time when the US presidency has been weakened. Declining corporate earnings meant that Wall Street was due for a fall from its dizzy heights in any event, but the uncertainty surrounding Bill Clinton is unhelpful for market sentiment.

With large parts of the world suffering from full-scale deflation, it is up to the US — despite its record trade deficit — and Europe to try to act as the buyers of last resort, providing a ready market for world output. But the chances of this happening are slim if the Dow Jones and the dollar continue to crash. If Mr Clinton falls on his sword over the next few weeks, it will not be because of the congressmen on Capitol Hill but because of the financiers on Wall Street.

Ultimately, it may prove impossible to ring-fence Brazil and Hong Kong, end Japan's long recession and maintain robust American growth. It may be that a combination of over-production and structural deficiencies in the global financial structure will coalesce to turn a cyclical downturn into something much nastier. It may be that the herd instinct of markets prevents sensible policies from working.

But the debate now is about the form intervention should take, rather than whether it should happen. There is a sense that a dam has broken and all sorts of progressive ideas can now be discussed.

Mr Hale, for example, is expressing concern about the power of the 4,000 US hedge funds and bank proprietary departments, with $250 billion of capital dedicated to short-term trading activity, to destabilise small and medium-size countries which are not equipped to cope with mass selling of their currencies or equity markets.

History shows that the Great Fire helped to purge the Great Plague of the previous year. The industrial West will survive the present crisis, but a long-overdue cleansing process has begun.

● The IMF warned this week that it is so strapped for cash after record levels of lending that it may be forced to borrow directly from its richer shareholders to deal with future global financial emergencies. Its problems have been exacerbated by the US Congress's failure to approve a capital increase to the Fund.

The rich and poor are growing further apart

Larry Elliott and Victoria Brittain

THE United Nations last week called for urgent action to raise the living standards of the world's poor after disclosing that 1 billion people have been left out of the consumption boom of the past two decades.

In its annual Human Development Report, the UN said that gross inequalities between rich and poor countries were worsening, with 20 per cent of the global population accounting for 86 per cent of consumption.

With consumption increasing sixfold in the past 20 years and doubling in the past 10, people in Europe and North America now spend $37 billion a year on pet food, perfumes and cosmetics.

This figure would provide basic education, water and sanitation, basic health and nutrition for all those now deprived of it and still leave $9 billion over, according to the UN figures.

However, the UN is not joining the calls of some "small is beautiful" lobby groups to cut consumption, but rather to look for changes in patterns of consumption, according to the report's main author, Dr Richard Jolly. "Abundance of consumption is no crime, but it is scandalous that the poor are unable to consume enough to meet even their basic needs," said James Gustave Speth, the UN Development Programme administrator.

Dr Jolly called the inequalities "grotesque", and said the "gargantuan excesses" in consumption highlighted by the report would have to be changed.

According to the UN, the 225 richest people in the world have a combined wealth of more than $1 trillion — equal to the annual income of the poorest 47 per cent of the earth's population, some 2.5 billion people. The three richest people on the planet — Microsoft's Bill Gates, the Walton family of Wal-Mart stores and legendary investor Warren Buffett — have assets that exceed the combined GDP of the 48 least developed countries.

"It is estimated that the additional cost of achieving and maintaining universal access to basic education for all, basic health care for all, reproductive health care for all women, adequate food for all and safe water and sanitation for all is roughly $40 billion a year," the UN said. "This is less than 4 per cent of the combined wealth of the 225 richest people."

The report shows that the inequalities of current consumption opportunities have excluded more than a billion people who do not meet even their basic consumption requirements. One goal of the UN report is to raise their consumption levels.

Among the 4.4 billion people in developing countries, almost three-fifths lack basic sanitation, one-third have no safe drinking water, one-quarter have inadequate housing, while one-fifth are undernourished and the same proportion have no access to modern health services.

Transport for most of the world's poor is by foot. There are five cars per 1,000 people in East and South Asia, 11 per 1,000 in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 450 per 1,000 in the industrialised countries.

These skewed patterns of consumption of fossil fuels place the people of the poorest countries in double jeopardy. Burning of fossil fuels has quintupled since 1950, and it is the wealthiest one-fifth of the world who consume more than 50 per cent of them.

The poorest one-fifth of the world are responsible for just 3 per cent of carbon dioxide levels, but the stressing of the environment from carbon dioxide emissions means that the poorest people, who live in low-lying regions such as Bangladesh and parts of Egypt, risk losing their homes as sea levels rise because of global warming.

Bangladesh could see its land area shrink by 17 per cent, while countries such as the Maldives and Tuvalu could vanish under the sea altogether.

A child born in New York, Paris or London will consume, pollute and waste more in their lifetime than 50 children born in a developing country. But it is those poor children who are the most likely to die from air and water pollution, the report said.

AIR pollution causes 2.7 million deaths a year, with 80 per cent of the victims in rural poor areas of developing countries. In Latin America and parts of Asia millions of children are at risk of losing four or more IQ points because of lead emissions. In these areas the growing economic crisis is already showing up in health and education cuts which will accelerate the downward consumption trend already hitting these countries.

"The message of 'limits to growth' of the 1970s has changed — the new emphasis is not on the world running out of non-renewable resources, but on the threat to the renewable resources: air, soil, forests, fish, biodiversity, and water," said Dr Jolly.

The consumption of fresh water has almost doubled since 1960, the marine catch has increased fourfold, with a quarter of fish stocks depleted and another 44 per cent being fished at their biological limit.

Developing countries now face a strategic choice: they could repeat the industrialisation and growth processes of the past 50 years, or they could leapfrog to growth patterns that are pro-environment and pro-poor.

Human Development Report, 1998, United Nations, see http://www.undp.org/undp/hdro

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates September 14	Sterling rates September 7
Australia	2.8161-2.8198	2.8210-2.8274
Austria	20.08-20.10	20.25-20.26
Belgium	58.87-58.97	59.34-59.45
Canada	2.5394-2.5416	2.5363-2.5395
Denmark	10.86-10.87	10.94-10.95
France	9.57-9.57	9.647-9.657
Germany	2.8542-2.8571	2.8780-2.8804
Hong Kong	12.98-12.99	12.92-12.93
Ireland	1.1388-1.1432	1.1467-1.1503
Italy	2,818-2,821	2,842-2,846
Japan	222.97-223.23	219.63-219.93
Netherlands	3.2194-3.2228	3.2483-3.2518
New Zealand	3.2533-3.2592	3.2780-3.2834
Norway	12.69-12.70	12.85-12.85
Portugal	292.63-292.83	294.62-294.88
Spain	242.39-242.67	244.31-244.54
Sweden	13.19-13.21	13.22-13.24
Switzerland	2.3533-2.3561	2.3534-2.3585
USA	1.6764-1.6772	1.6686-1.6696
ECU	1.4523-1.4539	1.4624-1.4648

FTSE 100 Share Index down 78.4 at 5256.6. FTSE 250 Index down 10.4 at 4735.7. Gold up $1.50 at $290.25.

Domenico Pacitti reports on the Mafia menace in Italian universities

Corrupt seats of higher learning

DIEGO CUZZOCREA, the rector of the University of Messina in northeastern Sicily, has been charged with aiding and abetting the Mafia. This follows his resignation in June after police inquiries into the allegedly simulated theft and attempted destruction of his own car in order to mislead murder investigations. The university's pro-rector, Giacomo Ferra, and administrative director, Eugenio Capodicasa, face similar charges.

Cuzzocrea, aged 55, a professor of surgery who only two months ago was voted into his second term of office, is also being questioned about the murder of medical professor Matteo Bottari, shot dead in a Mafia car execution in January.

Meanwhile Giuseppe Longo, aged 46, a professor of gastroenterology at Messina, was arrested on Mafia charges in late June and is being investigated in connection with the Bottari murder. Longo, who is being held in prison, is alleged to have links with a Calabrian cosca clan.

The university had provided a regular Godfather-like scenario of violence stretching back 20 years and culminating in a two-year crescendo of campus bombings, shootings, intimidations and murders.

The Messina Committee for Peace and Unilateral Disarmament, a voluntary organisation founded in 1981 to combat the Mafia, racism and the exploitation of southern Italy by the north, has revealed full details of the Cuzzocrea family's 26 companies. Covering a wide range of activities including construction, pharmaceuticals and food supplies, the family monopolised the university's $133 million-a-year contract work, with the rector running the university as a sort of family business. Yet no one spoke out.

Similar complaints are now being made against the University of Palermo, and there are increasing fears that the single university autonomy and privatisation policies of the higher education minister, Luigi Berlinguer, with their lucrative, locally administered contracts, could create considerable Mafia interest. Criticism has also been expressed over Berlinguer's repeated failure to intervene in Messina, despite his alleged long-standing knowledge of the situation.

Messina committee member Giuseppe Restifo, a professor of modern history at Messina and chairman of the local Green party regional council, explained: "A natural subservience to power, the fear of retaliation, popular scepticism in the efficacy of justice, and the sharing of common interests with organised crime are the main reasons for reticence. This social consensus of silence has produced a Kafkaesque feeling of cultural death, moral stagnation and impending doom and must first be defeated if any real progress is to be made.

"The extensive violence", he pointed out, "is due to the fact that control of the university is being contested by three rival gangs from Palermo, Catania and Calabria, each of which has members within the university itself. Paradoxically, the real danger sign will be when things calm down, as this will indicate that the university has been definitively consigned into the hands of the successful gang."

Another committee member, Antonello Mangano, aged 23, presented a painstakingly researched, 400-page graduation thesis on the Mafia to a stunned Messina examining commission in February. It explored the concept of Mafia, tracing its history and connections with Italian freemasonry, and documented its unchecked presence within the same University of Messina.

The epigraph, a quote from film director Pier Paolo Pasolini, set the tone: "They have in only a few years, especially in the centre-south, become a degenerate, ridiculous, monstrous and criminal people." The seven-minute oral exam, one of the shortest on record, was witnessed by a packed hall of curious observers and conducted by a commission of nine professors who denied him full honours as well as the opportunity to discuss his work.

"There was great tension," he recalled, ". . . But my biggest disappointment was that they, too, chose silence."


Prof Cuzzocrea: facing charges

Both the traditional Sicilian Mafia and university mafias, he admitted, share many features, such as the total lack of moral and social conscience, the code of silence, the exchange of favours, membership of powerful groups prepared to break the law, and the ruthless use of power to instil fear and a sense of servility. The important difference, he emphasised, is violence.

"Berlinguer's reforms", he argued, "simply lend continuity to the various negative processes in course. Italian universities continue to operate essentially as instruments for the accumulation of power. Berlinguer must make a clear break with this tradition."

The Messina committee's findings are confirmed from a foreigner's perspective by David Petrie, a Scot whose Verona-based Committee for the Defence of Foreign Lecturers combats all forms of university injustice and corruption.

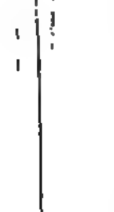
He said: "Berlinguer has asked for the spotlights to be kept on Messina. They should, of course, be aimed not only on Messina but also on himself and his rectors, from whom Italy can obviously expect nothing but silence and subterfuge. An important step forward would be for British academics to refuse to share a platform with their Italian counterparts."

Some of Italy's strongest voices are joining the appeal for radical change. President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, a former education minister, is known to have persistently vetoed the recommendations of freemason rectors made by the prime minister, Romano Prodi, for prestigious appointments.

Federico Zeri, widely considered the greatest living historian of Italian art, observed: "Universities are one of Italy's three biggest cancers; bureaucracy is another. The third I won't mention in order not to offend religious people.

"The real problem is that our professors have too much power," he said. "They should be given a three-year contract with the state, renewable on the positive judgment of students and faculty."

Indro Montanelli, Italy's veteran social observer, explains that the term "Mafia" designates not a criminal organisation but rather a typically Italian corporative spirit that finds its most brutal and historically rooted variety in Sicily. He warned: "When you live and work in a Mafia-run environment such as an Italian university, it is extremely difficult not to have some sort of dealings with the Mafia. These dealings may range from full complicity to tolerance and favouritism. Those who do not accept this should leave."





Mystic dreams beside the Dead Sea

In the shadow of Israel's nuclear reactor, a Jewish prophet leads a sect of 1,500 black refugees from US inner cities towards the Apocalypse. **Julian Borger** on the African Hebrew Israelites

AN early-morning fog is hanging over the Negev desert, but the sun is already burning holes in the grey haze and illuminating the great silver dome of Israel's nuclear reactor. Dawn is breaking over Dimona, and the Apocalypse has just crept one day closer.

In an old refugee camp on the edge of town, the morning will start like every other, with a game of hoops. A dozen black men — some teenagers some in their 60s — chuck a basketball around, shouting commentary in American inner-city slang blended with Hebrew: "Yo, *beseder* [OK], you ain't going nowhere".

It is a skilful and keenly contested game, but the atmosphere is relaxed and friendly. No one swears. Nearby, children are playing in the grass watched by smiling women in African-style robes and headgear.

It feels like walking into a dream and, arguably, that is just what this apparently idyllic scene represents. Thirty-two years ago, Israel Carter, a foundry-worker in Chicago, had a vision of a new life in Israel. In a flash of enlightenment, he says, God told him that he and many other African-Americans were descendants of the Israelite tribe of Judah. They had been scattered across Africa by the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Two millennia later, Carter was told that it was time to begin "the exodus from America to Israel", to await the end of "Euro-Gentile dominion".

The Chicago prophet's theories are as cranky as any of the messianic sects which have carved their niche in the theological theme park that the Holy Land has become. But Ben Ammi (as he is now known) can at least claim to have passed the test of time.

Setting off with 40 acolytes in 1967, he survived a disastrous two-year sojourn in Liberia, where an attempt to live "naturally" in the bush cost the lives of four people. Since the group's arrival in Israel in 1969, it has braved hunger and disease.

Ben Ammi is revered as a messiah by those he led out of the slums of Chicago in 1967

In this poor outpost a few kilometres from the Dead Sea, Ben Ammi is revered as a messiah by his 1,500 followers. They call themselves the African Hebrew Israelites, a vegan, polygamous community of black refugees from US inner-cities, living in the shadow of the silver-domed reactor, the hub of Israel's undeclared nuclear weapons programme.

It is a fitting setting to await the End of Days, which Ben Ammi cheerfully predicts will soon be upon us. Smiling benignly, the Dimona messiah declares: "We are in the last days of a civilisation. The civilisation of deception. In the book of Daniel it says that the kingdom of God will come in time of Euro-Gentile governments."

With his greying beard and wooden staff, he looks the part of the Old Testament prophet. His apocalyptic remarks once triggered concerns that the sect planned a Waco-style conflagration, but Ben Ammi has assured his Israeli hosts that he foresees the advent of the Kingdom of God as a sort of spiritual awakening, not a bloodbath.

When he first arrived, Ben Ammi had no idea of Dimona's strategic significance. It was only 17 years later, when a nuclear technician called Mordechai Vanunu experienced a religious epiphany of his own and decided to blow the whistle, that it became clear what was going on.

In 1991 Saddam Hussein made the point more forcefully when he sent a Scud missile arching towards the reactor. The sect now has three underground bunkers ready for any future attack.

"WE HAD to upgrade our awareness," Ben Ammi admits. "But we do feel that the Holy One of Israel has put a shield around us and the other people of Dimona."

As the Hebrew Israelites have established themselves in Israel over the decades, African-American icons from Louis Farrakhan to Stevie Wonder have travelled to Dimona to pay homage to Ben Ammi. More importantly, after decades of struggle against deportation, the "Black Hebrews" (as they are known in Israel) now believe they are within a few months of gaining the status of permanent residents, allowing them to buy property and spread their settlements to other, more fertile, areas of Israel.

At present, they are living in the same "absorption centre" they were assigned when the original Hebrew Israelites arrived in 1969. The government — unconvinced by their claims to Judaic heritage and alarmed by their messianic tone — sent them here rather than deport them and risk African-American wrath in the era of Black Power.

Since then, hundreds more disciples have arrived from the US, mainly from Chicago, and more than 780 Hebrew Israelite children have been born here, consequences of Ben Ammi's endorsement of polygamy and repudiation of all birth controls.

"Yes, sure we have family planning," says Yafah Baht Gavriel, the community public relations officer, brightly but defiantly. "We plan to have as many babies as possible."

It is an impoverished existence. The production of health foods such as tofu and soya-bean ice cream brings in a little income, as does the community's renowned gospel choir (generally agreed to be the best of its kind in Israel), and the occasional subsidy from American supporters.

Yet, according to Cohane Ahbir, a priest running the community gym, life in Dimona is a hundred times better than the gun- and drug-infested slums the Hebrew Israelites have left behind. "The majority of sicknesses and deaths are caused by the wrong mentality. With our diet, exercise and new mentality, our ambition is eternal life. I think I can make a couple of hundred years," Ahbir says. He is 45, but claims to be in better shape now than he was 20 years ago.

If the Hebrew Israelites' residency permits finally come through in December, as the Israeli government has promised, it will mark an extraordinary milestone for a group which has persistently questioned the right of its paler-skinned hosts to be there.

"The ancient Israelites were African people," Ben Ammi insists. The evidence he offers is at best circumstantial. He argues that before the Suez Canal was built, the Middle East was commonly regarded as part of Africa. As the Romans attacked from the north in the first century AD, it would be natural for the fleeing Jews to go south and into Africa.

Even after the trauma of slavery, Ben Ammi argues, Negro spirituals kept Israelite memories alive by their emphasis on Zion, Babylon and the River Jordan. Then there are linguistic quirks such as "ain't", a derivation he claims of "ain" (Hebrew for "there is none").

On this apparently flimsy historical platform, 1,500 people have built their "new society". Their way of life may seem eccentric, but that is hardly extraordinary in a land that has always attracted mystics. The fact that Ammi's band of disciples are still here, in Israel's ground zero, is simply proof of the power of dreams over reality.


Cottage industry . . . women of the community make supplies for their children to sell to their classmates' mothers
PHOTOGRAPHS: BRYAN McBURNEY

Champion of the poor

OBITUARY
Pierce Gerety

PIERCE GERETY, who died in the recent Swissair crash at the age of 56, was a champion of the world's refugees. In his work on their behalf, he never forgot his Harvard legal training: if the law is on your side, argue the law; if the facts are on your side, argue the facts; if neither are on your side, take off your shoe and bang it on the table.

The product of a Jesuit education, Gerety briefly considered entering the priesthood before opting for a lifetime of banging the proverbial shoe anywhere it could benefit the destitute — from Paris soup kitchens to Central African crisis zones. Latterly director of central Africa operations for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), he was returning to Geneva after visiting his French wife, Marie de la Soudière, a psychologist specialising in the effects of war on children.

Their life together had only recently become relatively settled — she based in Brooklyn and he in Geneva — after years in the world's troublespots, often apart. They met in Paris in 1962, when Gerety, a 21-year-old Yale university graduate, was studying theology and philosophy at the Institut Catholique — and working in a soup kitchen. After tearful farewells, he returned to the United States to take up a seminary place; Marie went to Mexico as a hospital volunteer.

But Gerety had made his choice. He got on a Greyhound bus to Mexico, eventually married Marie, and together they went to India for the Catholic Relief Services. Later, he attended Harvard Law School and became a legal-aid lawyer in New York City.

At the age of 38 he switched careers again, going with Marie to Thailand for the International Rescue Committee to help Cambodian refugees. He joined UNHCR in 1982 and, after a stint in Geneva, had spells helping Eritrean refugees in Sudan, Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Vietnamese refugees in the Philippines. From 1994, Pierce and Marie worked in the African Great Lakes region and Somalia, negotiating with warlords and rebel leaders for access for aid to tens of thousands of refugees.

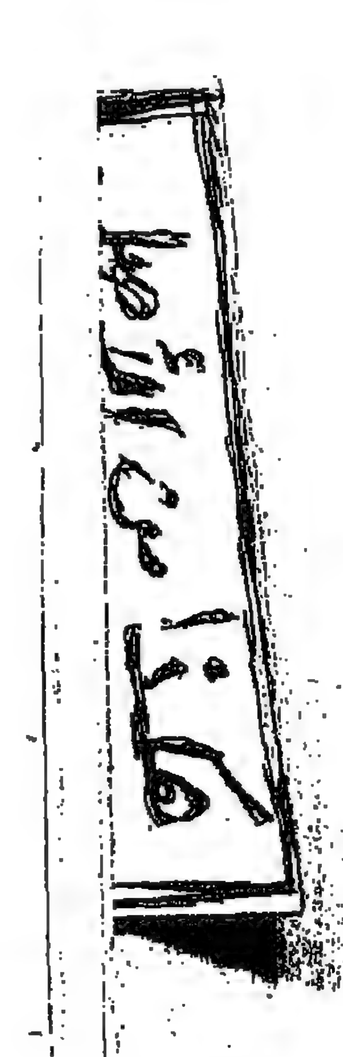
In Somalia in 1995, there was tremendous donor fatigue, but Gerety made sure that the country was kept on the map. A brave politician when he negotiated with warlords, he was a realist about what could be achieved.

Iain Levine, now Amnesty International's UN representative in New York, dined with Gerety in Brooklyn the night before he died. "He was difficult to work with at times, but it was understood by everyone that this was because he set high standards. In negotiations he was never aggressive, but took the approach that certain things — like human dignity — are non-negotiable," said Levine.

Gerety leaves Marie, two sons and a daughter. He is also survived by his mother, Helen.

Alex Duval Smith

Pierce Gerety, UNHCR official, born September 7, 1941; died September 2, 1998



Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

I HAVE recently seen lists of the "world's wealthiest men", which have included President Castro, said to be worth from $2 billion to $16 billion. The idea seems preposterous, but is it true?

NO ONE knows how wealthy Fidel Castro is, since the contents of his bank account (if he has one) are secret. The list to which the questioner refers was Forbes' Wealthiest 100, published last year. Castro's inclusion was accompanied by a note which indicated that the compilers had "estimated" his fortune as figures were not available.

As an academic studying Cuba, I have many contacts there and, when asked about Forbes' claim, both detractors and supporters were unanimous in their disbelief.

Supporters of Castro put such claims down to disinformation aimed at discrediting their leader (given the 40-year war by the CIA against him, this is highly credible). Detractors point out that if there were any real proof that Castro had amassed such a fortune, the CIA and the Miami Cuban mafia would have much more vehemently used it in their propaganda.

What is certain is that Castro enjoys a relatively comfortable lifestyle, but one that is by no means ostentatious for a president. — *Stephen Wilkinson, CubaSi magazine, London*

HAVING recently visited Austria, I noticed that the diet on offer seemed to be a lot higher in meat and dairy products than typical in the UK. Is this true and does it have any ill-effect on the population?

I HAVE just come back from a month in Austria, and if the questioner had been eating in pubs and restaurants, especially in the tourist areas, he would not have followed the typical Austrian diet. Austrians often have as a main meal what restaurants offer as a dessert.

The average Austrian is happy with some soup followed by *Palatschinken* (sweet pancakes), *Topfenstrudel* (special cheesecake) or *Apfelstrudel*; a huge variety of sweet or savoury *Knödel* (dumplings); pasta with eggs or sweet pasta with nuts or poppy seeds. However, tourists are offered *Schnitzel* or *Schweinsbraten* (roast pork) maybe because they cannot cope with the idea of a sweet main course. — *Fatima Martin, Woking, Surrey*

IF THE millennium bug were to cause many catastrophes and fatalities, would it be possible to prosecute individuals and companies involved in the computer and software business?

IT DEPENDS. If the parties harmed by the failure to address the Y2K problem by those involved in the computer and software industry attempt to sue on contract, they will be precluded by the limitations of the warranties to which they agreed when they purchased the products involved.

If the parties harmed prosecute their claims as a civil tort, they may be able to prevail on a known risk theory, such as those who pursued the asbestos and cigarette manufacturers.

Criminal prosecution is unlikely, in that it would be difficult to articulate or prove the requisite criminal intent. However, it is not outside of the realms of possibility, as witness the pursuit of Microsoft and Intel for antitrust violations by the US Justice Department.

It remains to be seen. We can only hope that the industry will protect the public good in order to protect their private gain. — *David Eisler, Lakewood, Ohio, USA*

Any answers?

FOLLOWING the break-up of the USSR, which country now has the largest empire in the world? — *Paul Wagstaff, Malindi, Kenya*

HAS there ever been a real-life Bond-style villain? — *Scott McKinstry, New York*

WHENEVER my fiancé is in the room, he is the perfect "mosquito-conductor". They only bite him and no one else. How come? What makes his blood so attractive in comparison to mine or our friends'? The poor man never has a quiet night in summer whereas I do not have to worry about being bitten, as long as I sleep in the same room. — *Karen Knecht, Heidelberg, Germany*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

A Country Diary

Richard Mabey

BLAKENEY, NORTH NORFOLK: Village amateur dramatics owes a lot of its appeal to the fact that the audiences know the actors in their off-stage lives. The Blakeney Players are famous for their summer-season shows, and this year's was a Famous Five pastiche of derring-do on the Point, the sand and shingle spit that shelters Blakeney harbour from the North Sea.

The production succeeded in tapping the audience's communal memory of childhood days spent haunting the dunes and pools. Yet what impressed me as much as the gossip of the plot was the role the production played in the social life of this village. Most of the cast had multiple roles, and one of the characters spent the day of the final performance preparing a pre-show supper for 150. This was also a show put on with "off-comers" and summer tourists in mind. Blakeney's community hall even has part of its dedication to its many "visitors" — so much more generous than the introverted and defensive role currently being suggested for the countryside in some quarters.

I looked around my fellow playgoers, and the diverse mixture of old and new residents, mussel-growers, sculptors, ferry-operators, painters, wardens, fishermen — all, like the play itself, living off the local landscape — and felt I had glimpsed the exciting future of the countryside that lies beyond farming.

Racing shell . . . artist's impression of the fleet-footed, lightweight tortoises that lived on the Mascarene islands until the early 1800s

Thin evidence points to racing tortoises

Tim Radford

MAURITIUS was the death of more than just the dodo. It may have been home to the world's only lightweight, racing tortoise — until human beings arrived.

Jeremy Austin, of the Natural History Museum, told the British Association festival of science in Cardiff this month that the three Mascarene islands of Réunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues, in the southwest Indian Ocean, may have had six species of giant tortoise.

Most tortoises have thick shells. "The thick, bony shells also make tortoises heavy and slow," said Dr Austin. "However, in the Mascarene islands there were no large predators, so the tortoises adapted to the enemy-free island life by reducing the thickness of their shell to the bare minimum, and having much larger openings for the legs and head.

"This would have reduced the weight of the shell enormously, leading to the possibility that these animals were the world's only lightweight racing tortoise."

In one of the first studies of its kind, Dr Austin has used ancient DNA recovered from bones trapped in caves to answer questions about the evolution of this type of tortoise.

They could have got to Mauritius and the other islands only by drifting along on ocean currents — an amazing feat of endurance and long-distance travel in itself.

Biologists were puzzled as to whether the two forms evolved only once, and spread from one island to the other two, or whether similar forms evolved independently on each island. Scientists at the Natural History Museum have enough DNA — which can be read as a kind of clock — to begin to answer some of the questions.

Letter from Slovenia Lionel Titman

Relative strangers

A WOMAN trundles by, pushing a huge wheelbarrow overflowing with turnips. She calls out to us. Smiling warmly, she presses a bagful of fresh turnips on us. Then more. And more. Our cries of "Enough, thank you" fail to stop her. She says how pleased she is that we are moving into this little village. Twenty years ago she and her husband were incomers. Now we are. From this we assume that no newcomers have moved in for 20 years and that we have taken over the baton from her. My wife was born about 10km away and so is a foreigner while I am a genuine alien from Britain.

We bought half a house, and built up to the reinforced-concrete ground floor ceiling. Britons are surprised how many house-shells were still standing after the 1991 war — the answer lies in the concrete flooring. The owner had dreams of a large family home. But his two daughters made it clear that village life was not for them, and his wife divorced him. Selling the house to us gave him a windfall that enabled him to buy silk shirts and a Mercedes, which improved his standing at the local pub no end.

One team of builders were all from the same Albanian village in Kosovo. Eventually, the boss admitted that he knew my wife, Ana. He had been a witness when Ana had been acting as a court interpreter. An odd case in that he refused to give much information. But we found out that he had been shot in both shoulders, apparently in connection with a deal for Kosovo guns. As a result, he cannot pick up anything heavy — so he had to become the boss.

We were told of a woman in the women's refuge who needed money. Apparently she was a victim of wife-battering so we offered her some work. She is a Belarussian, speaking Slovene with a strong Russian accent. One day a neighbour wanted to see Ana urgently. Did we know that her husband had thrown her out because she had been running a sex chatline from home? Oddly, the woman seems to think that her husband was quite right to throw her out.

Next door to us are a retired couple, one of whom is like a village elder who is often asked to resolve disputes between villagers. He lived here as a small boy during the second world war when the Germans invaded. They decided to settle the valley with German farmers. What to do with the incumbent Slovene farmers? Simple. Send them to Dachau. The small boy was housed just outside the concentration camp — his father was sent inside where he was gassed with all the others.

On the other side of us live the retired couple's daughter and her small family. Next to them is grandfather — an old man who had a terrible reputation as a hard man in his younger days. It is said he once held a baby over a cauldron of boiling water, threatening to drop it in.

A state of war exists between the old man and his grand-daughter's family — he takes them to court and threatens to burn them out. So it was with some trepidation that we saw one of the outhouses on fire. The combined efforts of ourselves and the neighbours failed to douse it. So Ana called the fire brigade.

The finger of suspicion pointed at the old man, whom the police quizzed with an air of boredom edging towards interest as a large part of the village assembled for the day's spectator sport. No, it had nothing to do with him, he maintained. The arrival of a detective changed the story — he had seen someone from the village come along and start it.

People told the detective of previous incidents. The result was an agreement that the old man would have to go back into a mental institution. They had to send in the heavy mob before he would agree to go, threatening that he was going to get himself a lawyer and sue the lot of them. The family breathed easy again. A place would be found for him in a home and that would be that. But there was no room in the home. So two weeks later he was back.

When Federico Andahazi wrote a novel about the clitoris, Argentines were scandalised — and women rushed to buy it for their husbands. **Maya Jaggi** meets the man who tackled one of the last taboos

The pleasure principle

EVERY discovery is arrogant, says Federico Andahazi, and possibly none more so than that charted in his remarkable novel The Anatomist. At its heart is a real Renaissance scientist from Padua who made the bizarre claim to have discovered the clitoris — or at least flagged it in European anatomy books for the first time.

That the man was called Mateo Colon and was a near-contemporary (though no relation) of his more famous Genovese namesake Cristobal Colon — Christopher Columbus — was an irresistible call to likening the mapping of territories and bodies, the driving of proprietorial flagpoles into earth and flesh.

Andahazi, a 34-year-old Buenos Aires psychoanalyst of Hungarian descent, was awarded Argentina's main literary prize, the Fortabat, for this, his first published novel. But while his anatomist is tried as a heretic and his work banned for unveiling that which should have remained hidden, Andahazi found his topic scarcely less of a taboo 400 years on. Tipped off about the book's contents, the 72-year-old "Cement Queen" heiress, Amalia Lacrose de Fortabat, cancelled the prize ceremony. Her objection: the novel failed to "contribute to the exaltation of the highest values of the human spirit".

The jury stood firm and the $16,000 cheque was quietly slipped under the writer's door. The book become a bestseller across Latin America — more than 70,000 copies sold in Argentina alone — and the spat helped secure the unknown Argentine a record $200,000 for English-language rights from Doubleday in the United States. His novel now appears in English for the first time, with film-makers including Amadeus director Milos Forman and Hector Babenco, who made Kiss Of The Spiderwoman, knocking at his door.

While the scandal might seem laughable (Mrs Fortabat denounced Andahazi as a "communist porn artist"), the author is not amused. In London after speaking at a writers' gathering on censorship in Spain, he points out that under Argentina's dictatorship of 1976-83, and its Dirty War in which 30,000 people "disappeared", "to call someone a communist or a pornographer was to sign their death warrant; any censorship today reverberates with the loss — through murder or suppression — of the previous generation of writers".

Sex has always troubled the powerful, not least for its ability to vault socially constructed barriers — of wealth, class, race, even gender. And the subversive potential of female desire has evoked a particular dread. The *kleitoris* (from the Greek "little hill") has doubtless been known of — and enjoyed — for centuries. The Latin poet Juvenal made reference to it as the "cock's comb", while those in Africa and the Middle East enforcing the pre-Islamic, Pharaonic practice of "female circumcision" knew only too well the site of women's pleasure since they cut it out, the better to rule their wives and daughters (2 million girls are still mutilated each year).

Sighs aren't everything . . . Federico Andahazi and the cover of his book. 'The clitoris is odd. It's perhaps the only bodily organ which has no other purpose other than pleasure'
PHOTO (ABOVE): ALEJANDRA LOPEZ

Yet what was known in private was not named in public — and what women knew was not "knowledge". Even today, of 15 standard GCSE sex education textbooks, only five mention the clitoris or label it on diagrams.

"The clitoris is odd," says Andahazi. "It's perhaps the only bodily organ which has no other purpose than to afford pleasure. Its discovery — or invention — in the 16th century obviously had an impact on the representation of women as agents of pleasure. Until then, sex for women was supposed to be a conduit to childbearing and nurturing, not enjoyment."

His interest was first piqued by an apparent historical blackout. Although Colon was a reputable scientist of his day who theorised about the circulation of blood 50 years before its English "discoverer" William Harvey, little is known of him. "How could someone of that stature pass unnoticed through history?" asks Andahazi, in whose novel identifying a diminutive "female penis" ("It's a man," cries the startled anatomist's aide) is as great a heresy as Galileo's remapping of the heavens.

Yet what emerges is not so much a clash between science and the Church as a contest between men for women. The clerics, jealous of a man rumoured to leave women bearing "a smile like the Mona Lisa", want the discovery locked up in forbidden books. "What would happen", they ask, "if the daughters of Eve were to discover that, between their legs, they carried the keys to both Heaven and Hell?"

But the anatomist is himself a conquistador of the female body. For him the goal is not to pleasure a woman but to possess her.

"Every act of discovery brings with it an act of appropriation; that's the only reason you discover things: to patent them," Andahazi says. "The most brutal example is the discovery of the New World, which became the property of the Old. But it's a metaphor for what happens to women; male power is about appropriating them body and soul."

According to Aristotle's theory of conception, a father's semen conferred a soul (on male offspring) while the mother furnished mere flesh and blood — a curiously circular apologia for Greek laws of male inheritance.

Yet in Andahazi's comic burlesque, the valiant explorer gets lost in his own rib — as the biblical origin of woman would have it. Both his women (Ines de Torremolinos and Mona Sofia, the madonna and the whore) opt to own their bodies and be mistress of their hearts.

"So it's the story of a failure: Mateo Colon thinks he's possessing the body and soul of a woman but he fails utterly because there's no way force can appropriate another person's will."

Andahazi, who describes himself as "a man of the left", declines to label himself a feminist, since "feminism for me is not an all-explaining theory; the struggle is much wider than the battle of the sexes".

He may want his critique of power understood as more than a history of female anatomy, but an evident thirst for the subject may frustrate him. A New York Times survey in Buenos Aires found women were buying the novel in droves to give to their husbands and boyfriends — hinting they might learn something. As one woman put it: "It's apt that the book is set in the Middle Ages because that's exactly the level of knowledge most men have when it comes to female anatomy."

Andahazi laughs that the response of women in other countries is unlikely to be different, since "It's not just macho Latin American men who are preoccupied with their own pleasure — though there may be some truth in the stereotype". But he is alarmed to find his novel of ideas approached as a sex manual.

Ironically, it may itself be flawed as such. The book describes the clitoris as "barely exceeding the size of the head of a nail". According to Australian research reported in New Scientist last month, the clitoris is "10 times bigger than the average person thinks", encompassing erectile tissue that extends far into the body. Scientists may be catching up with what women's studies — Shere Hite, the Boston-based Our Bodies, Ourselves — have insisted since the early 1970s: that there is indeed far more to the clitoris than meets the eye. Perhaps the most obvious thrust of that discovery is that men and women might not be so different after all. Now there's a heresy.

Vowel play with English

Tim Radford and Martin Wainwright

IS "POUR" something you do with a teapot? Or is it something you are when you are not rich? Whatever the answer, there will not be anything wrong with your vowels. You just may be showing your age.

John Wells, of University College, London, has been mapping the way the British speak English, and found that it is not what it used to be. Educated people no longer speak with what linguists call received pronunciation, or RP. And how they speak is gradually altering again, influenced by the "estuary English" of London and the southeast.

He told the science festival in Cardiff last week that he had identified important pronunciation changes that had happened during three periods this century. In the early years, for instance, cloth and cross were pronounced clorth and crorss. In the mid-20th century, the words sure, poor and tour started to sound identical to shore, pour and tore. In the last decades of the century, the vowel sounds in happy, coffee and valley, began to grow tenser, and the l-sound in milk and middle, began changing to a w-sound.

Professor Wells has set a new questionnaire on pronunciation: Do you use a hard g in gibberish? Do you say punk-cher or puncher for puncture? He is not sure what is driving the pronunciation drift but it could be generational. "Comparing Prince Charles with the late Princess Diana is a very good example of one set of generational changes," he said. "She spoke upper-class English, as he does, but his pronunciation is much more conservative than hers. The Queen is a bit more conservative than him."

Trained actors once were obliged to speak RP — unless they had a comic cockney role. As for politicians, Tony Blair, Prof Wells said, was more flexible than many. "Rather than having one just one form of pronunciation, he demonstrated an ability to move up and down market according to circumstances. He did a show with Des O'Connor on TV and was accused of speaking estuary English. I think that is a variety of educated English — standard with a particular accent."

Prof Wells's theories received a mixed reaction. Brian Sewell, the art critic, said: "The trouble is he appears not to distinguish between what is sound, usable RP and what is merely fashionable RP. My mother's generation, for instance, pronounced the word off as 'orf', an ugly pronunciation; thank goodness it is no longer with us. It wasn't correct English, but simply an affectation."

Barrie Rutter, director of Northern Broadsides theatre company, said: "So-called RP is only about 140 years old, southern and public school — and I'm none of those things. It's a class thing and an excluding thing, and it's good that its definition should be widened."



How do you make dance out of the horror of rape? Darshan Singh Bhuller talks to **Judith Mackrell**

Bosnia's darkness visible



Beauty and the beast . . . Sarah Nicolls and Bob Smith in Planted Seeds PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS NASH

WHEN Darshan Singh Bhuller heard the Serbs were using rape as an instrument of war, he knew he had to do something. As a choreographer, he had been expressing himself in dance. But how to convey the horror?

Darshan Singh Bhuller was one of the great modern dancers of his generation. Dramatically he seemed driven to lose himself in the darkest corners of his roles. He is now bringing this theatrical instinct to his second career as a choreographer and film-maker. And for his current show, Planted Seeds, he has driven himself into one of the darkest corners of recent history — the Bosnian war.

Bhuller admits that he's a news junkie but says he also has a large capacity for melancholy, which is is why he was so gripped and appalled by the war in Bosnia. "The thing that got to me most was the way the soldiers systematically raped the women of their enemies, planting their sperm as a form of warfare. It upset me so much, I felt I had to know how this could have happened."

Bhuller wanted to witness Bosnia for himself. So, a year after the war ended, he flew to Zagreb and then took a 12-hour coach ride to Sarajevo, where he started to hang out in cafés, walk the streets and talk. He had some useful contact names, including that of British choreographer Royston Maldoon, who had been a local hero during the war, driving vans of supplies into the city and working with traumatised children on dance and drama projects.

The Sarajevans were also intrigued that an Indian living in London should be interested in them, and were fascinated when Bhuller told them about his own family's experience of Indian Partition. "They really connected with the fact that it was such a similar situation — two communities who'd lived happily side by side suddenly starting to tear each other apart."

Bhuller knew he couldn't deal with the politics of Bosnia, since dance as an artform is so bad at analysis. So he looked for "stories that dealt with the core physical experiences, like love, sex and violence, the ones through which dance could touch a nerve. In the end I picked three that could be entwined throughout the piece, like a soap opera."

His first was the story of a young Serb and his Muslim girlfriend who had been flashed across the world's media as the Romeo and Juliet of the war. They had been trapped in Sarajevo but believed they'd been given safe passage from the city so they could find a place to be together. In fact, they were double-crossed and killed by sniper fire as they left. They died in each other's arms.

Bhuller's second story dealt with a group of rape victims. The third was about two men who'd been aggressors. "In Sarajevo there were a lot of old men sitting around in cafés who seemed very withdrawn. It made me wonder what they'd done in the war, so I invented this character who'd been totally evil during the war, even though in everyday life he appeared quite normal."

When he returned to London, Bhuller began casting the dance as he would a film. The male lover was the charismatic dancer David Hughes. "David is very sexual and very masculine," Bhuller explains, "which was important. I'd been amazed in Bosnia how macho the men were. I felt a total wimp." The evil soldier was Bob Smith, a trained dancer who has since become a film actor and who "was able to convey exactly the particular evil I wanted".

Throughout the four weeks of rehearsals he relied heavily on his cast to contribute experiences and ideas, drawing especially on the women dancers for the rape scene. "I tiptoed around it for ages. I thought, a man doing a rape scene — I'm going to shoot myself in the foot. But I talked to the women constantly about what would happen if someone touched them like that. What would their reaction be? They really helped."

Some of the lighter dance scenes set in pre-war Yugoslavia developed because the work was too grim without them. Bhuller admits he got very "dark and agitated" after being submerged in so much misery. He felt guilty all the time he was in Bosnia "for being so lucky" and making the piece was in part a penance. But he also feels that as a choreographer, it was his way of facing up to tragedy and evil. "For me to really understand that horror, I have to be physical about it."

After the work's preview earlier this year, several people approached Bhuller to talk about their reactions. Among them was a Bosnian girl. "She'd been terrified watching the piece, and she'd even thought Bob was a real Chetnik. But she said, 'I'm so happy you're telling these stories'."

If you want to find a loony, shake your family tree

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

It is an eerie thought that, as Les and Janice Battersby ping-ponged around the East End looking for their runaway daughter, Toyah, they must have passed through the manor of their mortal rivals, the Albert Square Gang. The Battersbys come from **Coronation Street.** I would have paid folding money to hear Les criticise the ale in the Queen Vic.

Few people in soaps are perfectly assured of their parentage, but this past week has been a warning to young girls not to go in search of their natural fathers. Toyah did and met a weirdo. Louise from **Brookside** did and found a psycho.

Toyah went to London, or the great metrollops as they call it in Coronation Street, hoping her real father would be more sensitive and supportive than her stepfather, Les. A reasonable expectation. Almost anyone would be. She was next seen trussed up like a chicken, having encountered the aforementioned weirdo, who was slicing jam sandwiches in a marked manner. "I'm as nice as pie till people upset me. Then I just . . . go!"

The Battersbys followed to find her. Neither Les nor Janice speaks under a shout, and together they form a sort of human stereo system. Leytonstone nick, a haven of calm, blenched. "Control yourselves!" said the nicely-spoken inspector, who didn't know the Battersbys very well. Les turned a disturbing purple and Janice howled like a timber wolf, "You should have men out there looking for our Toyah!"

There is something peculiarly protective about the Lancashire use of our. A child is warmly gathered in with that word, as though by a pair of arms. I used to think my name was Ournancy. In some sense I belonged to the family. Les and Janice bawled together that London should be turned upside down and thoroughly shaken until Our Toyah fell out. Even though Les, you remember, was not her real father, Toyah belonged.

It could be argued that there are too many murderers in Brookside for one small close.

Last week our Lindsey threatened to shoot her husband, Tinhead tried to kill Sinbad, and Marcus, as his daughter Louise put it, "just seemed to go over the edge". She spoke more truly than she knew. Marcus was soon hanging by his fingernails from a precipice. Ollie cried, "Eleanor, help me! I can't hold him by myself!" but Eleanor, palely vengeful, replied, "Let him go!" And Marcus fell, flailing, to his death.

One way and another, it had been a simply terrible bank holiday for Ollie and Eleanor. They were celebrating their engagement in a romantically remote cottage in the Lake District. Then Marcus arrived. His moustache was Mephistophelean. He bared mirthless teeth. He was, quite clearly, mad.

Before his life sentence for murder, Marcus used to be a lecturer. Sociology, I suspect. All night he subjected his captive audience to a tirade about the inhumanity of prison life. As the fire burned out and the watery light of morning filtered in, your heart did go out to the wretched men who had shared his cell and listened to his lectures for 18 years. "I would look them in the eye and say, 'You can't hurt me. I don't exist in your world of thieving and brutality and misery.'." He taunted Eleanor with the possibility that he had given her Aids. He mocked Ollie's name. He pretended to set fire to himself. He did set fire to their car. At this point, Eleanor — and how one warmed to the woman — hit him him with a log. As there was an axe handy, you wondered at her moderation.

They stumbled towards safety. Crouching and lurking, Marcus pursued them and, when they reached the precipice, he pounced.

It was, of course, a cliffhanger.

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Palestine's crucible

THEATRE
Michael Billington

INSIDE **David Hare the playwright there has always been a journalist struggling to get out. But the two merge perfectly in Via Dolorosa, his one-man play at London's Royal Court Downstairs, which is both a brilliant piece of reportage about Hare's journey to the Middle East and a cunningly shaped work of art. For good measure, Hare also proves to be a performer of surprising élan.**

He starts a little tentatively. Emerging from a door in the back wall of the stripped stage, clad in crisp white shirt and dark flannels, he crosses a narrow bridge like a man about to enter a bear-pit. At first, with his eyes fixed on the middle distance, he seems to be reading off some imaginary autocue. But gradually his confidence builds, his timing grows, and by the end the sardonic observer has been informed by the passion that he encounters in his Middle Eastern journey.

This is the real secret of the evening: it is a voyage of discovery in which Hare, coming from a society where faith is a form of social embarrassment, finds dogma, division and despair.

Visiting Israel and Palestine, he doesn't sit in judgment even if the play is pervaded by the plight of the Palestinian refugees. But the question Hare implicitly asks is how much the Western visitor can fully understand of a world in which belief is literally a matter of life and death.

The big issues, however, grow out of scrupulous observation. In Tel Aviv Hare meets a secular liberal like the theatre director, Eran Baniel, who regards the post-1967 preoccupation with land as profoundly "un-Jewish". But, crossing into the occupied territories, Hare stays with a Jewish family who regard the Oslo peace accord as a betrayal, who see Rabin as a traitor and who engage in hair-splitting arguments over Old Testament texts. Secular and religious Jews barely speak the same language. In Gaza and Ramallah, Hare encounters a similar mixture of fire and fission.

This is not, nor does it pretend to be, the whole truth about the Middle East. But it shows Hare's intelligence and irony encountering the volatile passions of Israeli-Palestinian faith and politics. And, while it questions the value of art in confronting the bare facts of the Holocaust, it reinforces one's faith in theatre as a means of communication.

Hare, astutely directed by Stephen Daldry, records his subjective impressions, delineates character, fleshes out the issues and shows he has been changed by his Middle Eastern experience. When he returns to the comfort of his Hampstead home, you feel he is both relieved and yet scorched by his encounters with people living in a political crucible. You go expecting to hear a talk. What you get is a deeply moving theatrical mosaic.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Talent devoured by tragedy

VENICE FILM FESTIVAL
Derek Malcolm

NO FILM shown at Venice's 55th Film Festival caused such a division of opinion as Hilary and Jackie, Anand Tucker's debut feature about the life and tragically early death of cellist Jacqueline du Pré.

You would expect the film to be controversial, since it is based on A Genius In The Family, the book by Hilary and Piers du Pré that was criticised as a too-partial account of Jackie's failings. At its press showing, the movie even met with scattered booing.

Those who disliked Hilary And Jackie felt that Tucker and Frank Cottrell Boyce, who wrote the screenplay, had failed to make us understand why Jackie was so highly regarded and concentrated instead on the often fraught relationship between Jackie and Hilary.

That is, in part, because they tried not to make a musical biography full of the usual clichés, and thus give only a patchy impression of a career that lasted for almost a decade before du Pré was struck by illness. More important, though, they fail to make it clear that much of Jackie's troubled and troubling behaviour was a direct result of the slow onset of multiple sclerosis.

The barracking at the film's first showing, however, took no account of the fine performances, or of the fact that Tucker, an award-winning TV director, was handling a difficult subject in his first big-screen film.

Emily Watson as Jackie and Rachel Griffiths as Hilary are both outstanding, suggesting how Jackie's devouring talent ate away at the sisters' relationship, while never quite destroying their love for one another. This makes the final scenes of the film almost unbearably moving.

Watson, who showed an emotional power that won her a clutch of awards on Lars von Trier's Breaking The Waves, plays Jackie as a vulnerable, always slightly desperate woman who uses and abuses people almost automatically. For her, fame and a prodigious talent become an increasing burden until her disease makes her understand how life would look without them.

Whether this is true of the real du Pré is a matter for conjecture. But there is little in the film that is not well documented, such as Jackie's affair with Hilary's husband when her marriage to Daniel Barenboim (played by James Frain) grew rocky.

Tucker and Boyce tell the story from both Hilary and Jackie's point of view. The film tries hard to be even-handed. Hilary is not characterised as a saint, nor Jackie as a sinner. We are asked to make up our own minds.

The film, scored by Barrington Pheloung, but with extracts from Elgar, Dvorak, Bach, Haydn and others, will almost certainly outrage those who feel that the memory of this gifted woman should not be sullied by detailing the stormy failings of her private life. It may, however, move those who understand that those whom the gods shower with great talent are often the most difficult to live with.

With Tom Hanks, Jim Carrey, Warren Beatty, Michael Douglas, Matt Damon, Meryl Streep and a slew of other Hollywood stars in attendance, this year's festival has proved a riot for the paparazzi. It has also caused Felice Laudadio to be accused of pandering to the Americans, who have 20 movies in the 80-film programme.

He says he's doing no such thing. Having refused to show mindless special-effect blockbusters last year, he claims, he had many more thoughtful American films with which to decorate the festival this time round. Among them are Spielberg's Saving Private Ryan, Warren Beatty's Bulworth, Peter Weir's The Truman Show, and Woody Allen's Celebrity.

American offerings also include **The Opposite of Sex**, a debut for Don Roos, writer of Single White Female. It's a sharply written and often daringly politically incorrect comedy of modern American manners. Roos is clearly a new man when freed from Hollywood's commercial constraints.

Another notable debut was Peter Mullan's **Orphans**. The story of a Scots family mourning the death of their mother, it mixes baleful comedy, violent drama, even fantasy into a mélange as typically Scots as anything I've seen.

If the Roos and Mullan films were a surprise, the quality of Eric Rohmer's **Conte d'Automne** could be taken for granted. Even so, this story about a middle-aged wine grower is an almost perfect exposition of Rohmer's subtly prodding art.

Another veteran whose new film proved a popular attraction was James Ivory, whose **A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries** is based on Kaylie Jones's novel about the unsettled daughter of an American family living first in Paris and then the United States.

Beach of death

CINEMA
Richard Williams

THE second time I went to see **Saving Private Ryan**, I intended to take notes. This turned out to be a ridiculous idea. It was half an hour before I could drag my eyes from the screen, even though I knew what was coming. During this long, complicated and uninterrupted opening sequence, in which a platoon of American soldiers crosses a Normandy beach under fire from German machine-gunners, it is simply impossible to look away. In these minutes, Steven Spielberg raises the cinematic depiction of battle to a new level.

No amount of generalised reservations about the director's work can prevent an acknowledgement of the degree of skill — a kind of cinematic genius, even — at work in this sequence, on which the movie's reputation will probably rest. And it begins with a stroke of particular dramatic brilliance.

We're in a landing craft approaching Omaha Beach on the morning of June 6, 1944. In a classic war-movie setup, Spielberg shows us the faces of the soldiers as they prepare for imminent combat. These are the men, we're assuming, in whose company we'll spend the next three hours. Then the bow-flap comes down, the machine-guns open up from a bunker in the dunes, and within seconds all the men we've just met are dead or dying.

Straight away our emotional responses are recalibrated. We're plunged into a profound sensation of loss and futility. Never, it seems, has the intimate physical nature of battle been described with such immediacy.

As the next wave of soldiers steps over the bodies and on to the beach, Spielberg takes us under the waves, where a soldier is struggling to remove his equipment as corpses settle beneath him and bullets streak like silver fish, decelerating in the water. Then we're on the sand, witnessing sights that would beggar the imagination of a Hieronymous Bosch. A man is lying next to his own evacuated intestines, crying for death. Another is holding his own severed arm as he runs.



Saving Private Ryan . . . after a shattering start, sentiment takes over

The impact of all this is hard to exaggerate. The director of photography, Janusz Kaminski, uses a shutter opening that minimises the amount of light entering the camera, thereby reducing the range of colour and giving the film the raw look of an old newsreel, like monochrome tinted with khaki and blood. The handheld cameras lurch, flinch and plunge along with the confused and terrified soldiers. Several tableaux are copied directly from the famous Omaha Beach photographs of Robert Capa, along with the slight blur that pumps up the heartbeat. The scenes of physical devastation reproduce the real effects of shell fragments that amputate limbs, of explosions that atomise entire bodies, of rifle bullets that enter flesh neatly but tumble on their own axis, leaving an exit wound big enough to hide a football. And blood everywhere. Blood pumping, blood gushing, a sea of blood.

The sense of involvement is so pronounced that when two German soldiers rise from a trench with their hands up, our reflex is immediate. We're pulling the trigger, too. So we can hardly help granting the soldiers an exemption from the normal rules of engagement. That makes you think a bit.

And then, with almost two and a half hours to go, the trouble starts. As Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks) reassembles the remnants of his forces, Spielberg and his scenarist, Robert Rodat, introduce us to the familiar assorted core ensemble of the standard war movie, embodied by a group of outstanding young actors: the career soldier (Tom Sizemore), the feisty Brooklyn street kid (Edward Burns), the Tennessee sniper who says a prayer each time he squeezes the trigger (Barry Pepper), the Italian (Vin Diesel), the Jew (Adam Goldberg), the diligent medic (Giovanni Ribisi), and the cowardly runt (Jeremy Davies).

HANKS, voicing homespun doubts in a backporch drawl like a perfect synthesis of Henry Fonda and James Stewart, also has to apprise them of their new purpose, which is a mission to go behind enemy lines and find Private James Ryan (Matt Damon), the fourth son of an Idaho widow. Ryan's three brothers have all been reported killed on the same day; he is to be taken home to his mother on compassionate grounds. And this is where we begin to remember that Spielberg is not, after all, a great contemporary poet-historian, the Homer of the multiplexes, but merely an unusually skilled and ambitious manufacturer of sentimental Hollywood movies.

He and Rodat falsify a true story to suit their purpose. Such a mission was indeed ordered during the D-Day aftermath, but it was entrusted to a single US Army chaplain rather than a unit of eight fighting men. So the central moral dilemma is as bogus as it sounds when the soldiers indulge in prefabricated arguments about the wisdom of endangering several lives in order to save one.

The last hour is taken up by another set-piece battle, in which the surviving Americans try to repel a German advance on a small bridge. Here the echoes of the film's many precursors — including The Longest Day, A Bridge Too Far, The Dirty Dozen, The Bridge On The River Kwai, and Platoon — almost drown the metal thunder of the tanks as Spielberg orchestrates the final confrontation.

In the resolution of this climax, as in much else, the director shamelessly cheats his audience. An appallingly banal prologue and epilogue, both set in the present day, testify to his inability to resist the temptation of a feelgood cliché. And yet, with that shattering first half-hour, he has achieved something remarkable. The point of all that effort and expense and technique and hardware was to make us think, in a way we may never have thought before, about the real dead. The rest is entertainment.

Although it comes packaged in the exotic costumery and teeth-rattling riddims of Jamaican dancehall culture, **Babymother** is in one respect perhaps the most serious-minded British film of the year. Gauche and unpolished as it may be, Julian Henriques's film deals with a important social phenomenon. Among Britons of West Indian origin, a man refers to a woman as his babymother when she has borne his child out of wedlock. He is her babyfather. To some men, the existence of several babymothers is a source of pride and status. The other way round, the attitude may be more equivocal and complex.

Set not in the usual Brixton or Notting Hill but in the less obviously folkloric communities of Harlesden and South Acton, Babymother presents the story of Anita (Anjela Lauren Smith), the young mother of two children by a successful singer, Byron (Wil Johnson). While Byron comes and goes at will, Anita and two friends, Sharon (Caroline Chikezie) and Yvette (Jocelyn Esien) plan a career of their own, making use of Anita's talent for rapping.

The production values are no better than adequate, the acting and music are variable, and the basic storyline is familiar enough to evoke the memory of all sorts of pop exploitation movies. But British cinema has a genuine new star in the person of Anjela Lauren Smith, whose performance carries the film through its stickier moments.

In **La Vie de Jésus**, first-time director Bruno Dumont returns to his hometown in Flanders to examine the barren lives of the unprepossessing and largely unemployed boys who tear around the country lanes on their Mobylettes, play in the town marching band, grope helpless fat girls and insult Arab immigrants, all for want of anything better to do.

The title represents Dumont's desire to portray mankind's essential innocence, and the brutal ease with which it is superficially corrupted. As an example of the New French Rural Miserabilism, La Vie de Jésus should be seen by anyone who admired Sandrine Veysset's Will It Snow For Christmas and Manuel Poirier's Western.

Ulster in his bones

Karl Miller

Opened Ground: Poems 1966-96
by Seamus Heaney
Faber 352pp £20 (hbk) £12.99 (pbk)

ONE winter's evening in the Ulster of 1976 some workmen were lined up beside their van by masked gunmen, who required that any Catholics among them should step forward. There was one. As he was about to step forward his hand was squeezed by a mate, who may have wanted him to know that the others would not betray him to the freedom fighters. All the Protestant workmen were then shot dead.

The story was told by Seamus Heaney in the course of the address he delivered in Stockholm, in 1995, when he received the Nobel Prize, and it is included in Opened Ground, which is a kind of Collected Poems. The story deserves its place in the book. These poems, 1966 to 1996, were composed during the wintering-out of a 30-years' war.

There are many sorts of poem here: love poems, family poems, farm poems, metaphysical poems, his ancient-grave poems, the medieval-modern outcast-king poems — his Sweeniad. There are poems by him that are out and could have been in. But it's good to find fully represented the ones which tell you there is a civil war going on.

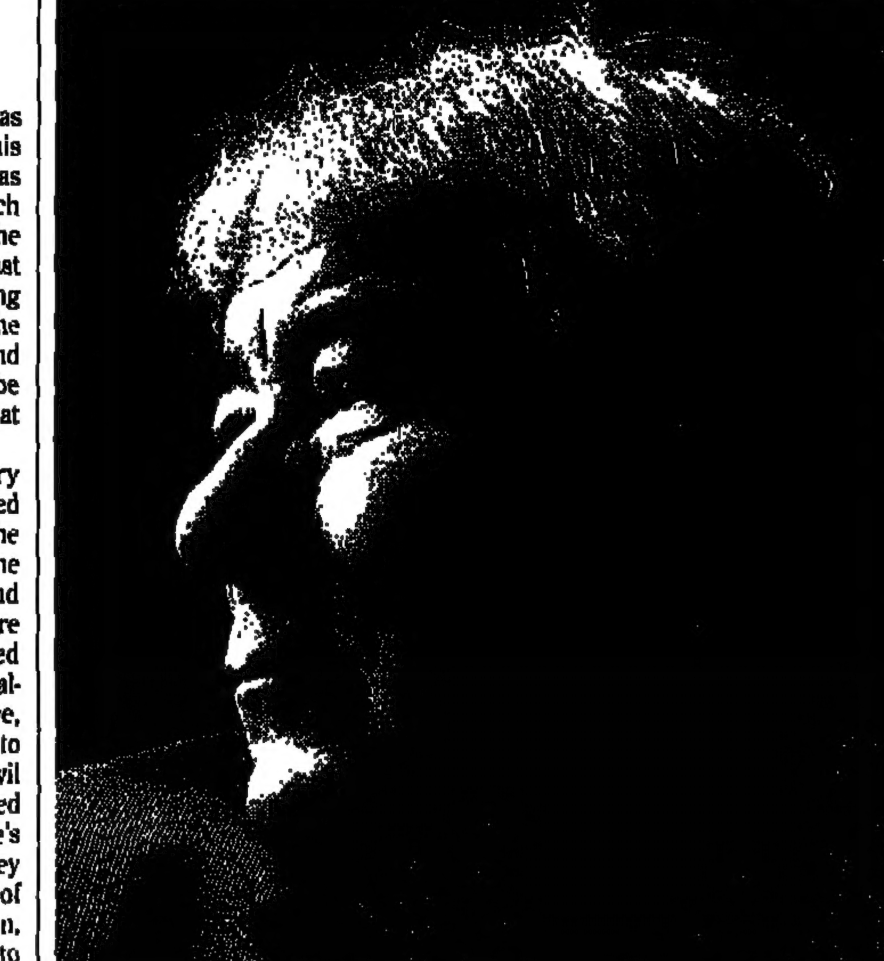
The strong contrast between the rural environment of his childhood and the world he was soon to enter — that of universities and the media, of podium and television studio — is another of the divisions which have helped to shape the achievement commemorated in this book. Off the farm he went, to places where the words and ways were different. Boundaries were crossed, and a language was created which tied together his various places.

The early celebrations of his first life, his country life, have at least as great a claim on the affection of his readers as anything else he has written. But it's also true that such retrospects were not outgrown; he keeps going back to Derry. "My last things will be first things slipping from me." The poem in which he watches his father digging, and which begins this book, grew to be a reference point for the poetry that followed.

The later stages of his poetry were to display a sophisticated scholarship. Here are some of the complex and cryptic poems of the modern world, of its academies and metropolitan centres. There were those at one time who reckoned that he should stick to being nostalgic and romantic, introspective, "personal". But he continued to write about Northern Ireland's civil war, a conflict that has resembled the small wars fought in Dante's internecine Middle Ages. Heaney turned to Dante in order to speak of the troubles of his native region, and Dante can sometimes seem to have served as his Virgil in leading him towards the vernacular plainness and spareness that was to become a feature of his verse.

Heaney has written some of his best poetry about Ulster's troubles, to which he has been and remains intimately exposed. A relative and a close friend have been killed, and he was himself in danger when the rage was at its worst. He is a Northern Catholic who no longer lives in the North. He was eventually to cast himself as a composer of Tristia, like the exiled Ovid. But not even by halves is he an exile.

He said in Stockholm that "while the Christian moralist in oneself" had been "impelled to deplore" the IRA's atrocities, he had felt that there had to be change in Northern Ireland. But he had also felt that "the very brutality of the means by which the IRA was pursuing change was destructive of the trust upon which new possibilities would have to be based".



Seamus Heaney . . . balancing act PHOTOGRAPH: DECLAN SHANAHAN

Heaney has been blamed for not taking sides, for not joining up. In another sense, there has never been any doubt as to what side he belongs to. "My wronged people" does not refer to Protestant Ulster. Nor, however, does it refer to the Provisional IRA.

In a late poem he has written of:

This principle of bearing, bearing
up
And bearing out, just having to
Balance the intolerable in others
Against our own . . .

Bearing and balancing may also be at issue in an earlier poem, published in Station Island (1984). A dead man appears to him, as the dead do in Dante, and is asked by the poet in self-reproach: Forgive the way I have lived indifferent — forgive my timid circumspect involvement.

This man is William Strathearn, a shopkeeper who returns from the grave to tell the story of his murder in one of the least indifferent pieces of verse that Heaney has written. Strathearn is questioned by his wife:

"Who are they anyway at this hour
of the night?"
"I know them to see," I said, but
something made me reach and
squeeze her hand across the bed
before I went downstairs into the
aisle of the shop.

To order the paperback of Opened Ground for £10 contact CultureShop

Trapped in a complex moral maze

Adam Mars-Jones

Amsterdam
by Ian McEwan
Cape 176pp £14.99

IAN McEWAN'S new novel, almost short enough to qualify as a novella, is a puzzling mixture of old themes revisited and a latent sourness of tone. This writer's eye has never been exactly indulgent, and there is a familiar relishable exactness about passages that describe, say, a hike in the Lake District on which the landscape fails to work its magic, resembling instead "a gigantic brown gymnasium". But as the story moves towards an uncharacteristically contrived climax, it can seem that the author is simply dismissing the creatures he has conjured up, and tying up his story with a sardonically, even a derisively, neat bow.

The early parts of Amsterdam seem to promise engagement with McEwan preoccupations such as the tragic precariousness of rationality, the futile human tendency to favour selfish interest over the group, the short term over the long; but this is almost a red herring. McEwan has always enjoyed posing dilemmas for his characters, and even setting traps for them, but the dilemmas in the new book are balder, and the punishments he metes out for failure less humane.

In the striking opening section of his last novel, Enduring Love, for instance, the hero was confronted with a quandary of the most urgent sort, namely whether to let go of a rope attached to a passenger-carrying balloon threatened by a high wind, and if so, when.

Set-piece dilemmas recur at two vital points in Amsterdam, and if they don't constitute the plot, they certainly power it. Again McEwan's characters must choose between their selfish preoccupations and the interests of a wider community. Should a newspaper editor print compromising photographs of a family-values Cabinet minister, when he is motivated by spite and scoop-lust rather than authentic disapproval? Is a composer in the full flood of creation, head brimming with ideas that will evaporate unless notated, justified in ignoring a merely human cry for help?

There was a time in McEwan's early fiction when the reader had no feeling that the characters were being measured against a code of conduct; more that the author was letting his creatures follow their own innocent or perverse logic. Moral judgments were studiously withheld. Then there began, above all in The Child In Time, the invoking of certain values, particularly the decommissioning of the male ego in favour of a new personality attuned to women and children. By the time of Black Dogs, two moralities were pitted against each other, even if the dice were loaded in favour of one, the less materialist one.

As time passes, the traps McEwan lays for his creatures become less arbitrary (as they were in, say, The Comfort Of Strangers) and more stringent, more philosophically loaded. The hero of The Innocent is required by the fiction that encloses him to perform an act that is only physically, and not morally, repellent (cutting up and disposing of the body of a worthless human being whose death isn't his fault), but the taboos he breaks destroy the love relationship he was trying to protect. The hero of Enduring Love implicates himself in a death by letting go of a rope, and spends the rest of the novel trying to come to terms with what this abandonment means.

In Amsterdam McEwan has two main characters, long-standing friends who were both, at different times, lovers of a woman who has just died. If McEwan seems more sympathetic to Clive the composer, or at least to his work life, with its combination of obsessional attentiveness to detail and aspiration to hugeness of utterance, than to Vernon the newspaper editor, struggling to steer his crisis-stricken broadsheet downmarket without seeming to do so, he compensates by giving Vernon a little more self-awareness.

In the two rudimentary moral mazes he constructs for these characters, the author seems to leave a clear thread, indicating the right course of action and all but garrottes them with it subsequently. Both men suffer not only shame: they also lose by their actions, in worldly terms. They lose what they sought to gain, and still there is more punishment in store.

But if there is a moral perspective almost too much in evidence in this latest novel, there is also a contrary force. In his earliest writing McEwan seemed attracted by the genre of black farce, and gained a reputation for heartlessness that he then spent some years dispelling. Now, particularly towards the end of Amsterdam, he seems almost to be seeking a return to the fold of black sheep. But McEwan's literary personality is too cool to allow for actual satire — even when he is pushing his book to its extreme conclusion he can't bring himself to let go. In Amsterdam he can at least boast the satirist's disaffection with his creatures, but perhaps he lacks the mysterious enzyme by which rage is metabolised as relish.

Paperbacks

Desmond Christy

Viagra: The Virility Solution, by Steven Lamm, MD, and Gerald Secor Couzens (Pocket Books, £7.99)

GENTLEMEN, if you are not potent now you could be anxious after a few chapters of this little volume. Fortunately, the bo[ok] (which has to be swallowed with a good dose of Viagra) points the way to restoring full sexual func[tion], enhancing endurance, bolster[ing] self-confidence and identifying s[ub]stances that help (fish, tea) or [hin]der (fags and booze) the work of the pill. I'd tell you more but I [must] rush off to my "virility exercises".

The Kennedy Tapes: Inside The White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis, ed Ernest R May and Philip D Zelikov (Harvard, £10.50)

A GRIPPING addition to one of the most studied events [in] world history. President Kenn[edy] gets high marks from the editors [for] his tapes, especially for his beh[av]iour on October 27, 1962: "He re[]mains calm, lucid, and is consta[ntly] a step, or several steps, ahead of [his] advisers. He is the only one in [the] room who is determined not to [go] to war over obsolete missile[s in] Turkey . . ." Whoops, apocaly[pse] was all too likely a possibility

The World of the Castrati: The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon, by Patrick Barbier (Souvenir, £12.99)

"*HOW* can the 'modern' mind", asks Barbier, "understand how a particular period dared seek pure and 'gratuitous' be[auty] through a mutilation so 'costly' [for] the individual who was subjected [to] it?" When people expressed sym[pa]thy for them, some castrati b[urst] out laughing. There were wo[rse] things in life. And if you were luc[ky] you might sound like an angel [and] make your fortune, as the man w[ith] the knife probably promised.

John Tavener: Glimpses of Paradise, by Geoffrey Haydon (Indigo, £7.99)

JUST as there are those who re[]gret that Gerard Manley Ho[p]kins turned to Catholicism, so the[re] are those who think that Tavene[r] might be a better composer had h[e] not been received into the Ortho[]dox Church. But a biography [of] either man shows that those w[ho] embark on spiritual journeys do[n't] feel they have much choice abo[ut] where they end up. Haydon's sym[]pathetic biography ends, with [a] fading orchestral drone, in 199[] Princess Di's contribution t[o] Tavener's fame will have to wait [for] a later edition.

In a heaven full of pennies

Peter Preston

Dennis Potter: The Authorised Biography
by Humphrey Carpenter
Faber 544pp £20

CONSIDER, as the carousel of coincidence spins, two Oxford graduates from decades past. Both came from poor, relentlessly deprived homes. Both scrambled up the ladder of escape called Education. Both, with wondrous eloquence, achieved fame, then notoriety. Both may be remembered as much their for their sexual hang-ups and mendacities as for their achievements. What is the difference between Bill Clinton and Dennis Potter?

One question; two answers. First, and most obviously, that Potter's gropings and lustings are part of the making of his reputation, while Clinton's are the destruction of his. But second, and perhaps more cynically, that the president rarely talks about his roots in hardship, while Potter talked and wrote of little else.

Clinton, boondocks raised by a single mum, making his way on talent and gut determination, could play that tale for sympathy in every scrape. It is, after all, the American dream. He doesn't, though. He finds it inappropriate. Yet there was never a moment during Potter's neon career when such a modest thought would have entered his head.

Dennis Potter PHOTO: JANE BOWN

You can't be neutral about the Potter plays, or the man himself. I am not a neutral. I was at university with him, part of an adjacent media set. I thought him, even then, a firework and a confection.

Is it fair, so long after juvenile events, to remember his Union speeches, the torrents of invective and class rhetoric and alliteration pouring into a whirlpool of emotionalism? It is, because they were always the same. Heard one, heard the lot. Is it fair to remember his editorship of Isis and the column of vitriol called (modestly) "Potter"? Yes. Been there once; read that before. Repetition was the mother of Potter invention.

As ruckus follows ruckus, Humphrey Carpenter is beginning to seem the Kitty Kelley of authorised biography. His defect is that he lacks an overall view, a thesis that makes sense of his subject. His virtue is that he toils mightily. He puts in the bits that don't fit as well.

Thus he quotes Potter off to Oxford, turning his back on the Forest of Dean. "I wanted to struggle out of the carefully wrapped cocoon of loyalties and sentiments. A potential Joe Lampton, without the remorse". Potter already thought of himself as a character from a novel.

Is this the "deeply shy and reclusive" chap Carpenter holds up for our examination? Very few of the early bits fit at all — and there's a tendency to manufacture episodes from his life to fit the image of self-romanticism. He brings his local girl up to Oxford to meet his friends and writes that she was "made to feel like a private in the officers' mess". Garbage, say the friends: opportunism and exploitation. Later, when psoriasis and arthritis seize him, he writes about his left knee, suddenly "the size of a soccer ball, bulging against my trousers". Garbage, with medical records to prove it.

In other words, Potter made things up or left things out. And once you realise that, you wonder what other self-spins he doctored. Even the sensation of his 1993 MacTaggart Lecture — I was "abused out of innocence" at 10 by "an adult's sexual appetite" — diminishes in another telling to "the smallest interference" by fumbling, wracked Uncle Ernie. "It was the drink, you know, and it didn't happen all that often."

The inevitable problem is how much any of this stuff matters. He could have been a brilliant journalist (his TV reviews for the Daily Herald seared the page). He was electric, and a brave man battling a foul illness. He became the television playwright of his generation who everyone thinks of first. Pennies From Heaven and The Singing Detective belong in any 20th century archive. Writers are always building their own special worlds. Why worry about Potter's?

The difficulty is that Carpenter invites us to worry; indeed, makes it unavoidable. The confected reality is supposed to shape our reality. And, because he has no grasp of what was really stunning about Potter — the few times, such as The Singing Detective, when he was disciplined enough to turn his experience of a pain he did not need to confect into a shriek of humanity — Carpenter is forced to plough through the lesser canon as though it had anything to offer.

Dennis Potter possessed a narrow gift. He had neither the warmth of Alan Bleasdale, nor the control of John Hopkins. He was Dylan Thomas and Bernard Levin out for a night at a strip club. He does not survive 666 pages of Carpenter because their sheer omnivorousness diminishes him. The talk of prostitutes and flings demeans the central relationship with a wife who loved him and a family which cherishes his memory. Poor, sad Uncle Ernie.

He deserves to be remembered for the shock of the new, for a finite output which was raw and fresh, and for his courage. That last interview with Melvyn Bragg was magnificent. He has his place in a heaven full of pennies. The rest (like Monica: My True Story) is not history and is best left unread.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £16 contact CultureShop (see page 28)

Single moment of passion

Christina Patterson

Cereus Blooms at Night
by Shani Mootoo
Granta 272pp £14.99

NOT many writers have the nerve to set their first novel in Paradise. In the case of Shani Mootoo, whose debut was short-listed for all the major literary prizes in Canada, it's the name of a small Caribbean town. As the horrifying story unfolds, it proves to be a hothouse of secrets, cruelties and Hardyesque missed opportunities, a Paradise which is, of course, heavily and increasingly ironic.

The tale is told by Tyler, the only gay male nurse on the island of Lantanacamara. His arrival at the Paradise Almshouse coincides with a major local scandal. Three weeks later, the source of it, a skeletal, bird-like old woman strapped to a stretcher and smelling of "rich vegetable compost" is delivered to the almshouse. Tyler feels a strange empathy for the old woman with clenched fists. Under his loving care, Mala Ramchandin begins to calm down. Her mad wailing is replaced by perfect imitations of birds and, finally, by speech. From her diffuse ramblings and the stories of her only regular visitors, Ambrose and his beautiful son Otoh, Tyler is gradually able to piece her story together.

Halfway through his childhood, Mala's father, Chandin, son of indentured labourers from India, is adopted by white missionaries. He learns to strut, sport white linen and speak in pompous polysyllables. He also falls in love with his adoptive sister, Lavinia. When his love is thwarted, he marries her Asian friend Sarah and they have two daughters, Pohpoh (Mala's childhood name) and Asha. All four are delighted when Lavinia, returning from abroad, becomes a regular visitor, but one day Chandin returns to the house just as Sarah and Lavinia are about to elope. As he surveys the empty home, the carriage draws away, leaving the girls to a lifetime of revenge from a father mad with rage and grief.

As in practically every other novel published at the moment, this takes the form of sexual abuse. Faced with rape at home and bullying at school, Pohpoh finds solace in nature. She hides in hedgerows and makes a habit of collecting and protecting snails. Her sister runs away, but nobody knows what's happened to her father until Otoh, the first visitor for 10 years to her collapsing, rotting, home, encounters an overwhelming stench from a downstairs room.

This might sound a bit like Miss Havesham meets William Burroughs, but it's actually rather beautiful and moving. Shani Mootoo writes with great precision and strength. As you might expect of a poet, she's strong on symbolism, too. The central image is the cereus plant, which blooms for one night only, releasing its heady dual scent, "one a vanilla-like sweetness, the other a curdling". This reflects Mala's life, a single experience of passion, followed by decay. It also suggests a Paradise Lost, where beauty is doomed to be destroyed, cruelty and despair to flourish.

Tyler is a self-conscious narrator whose own story keeps bursting through. The pressure of his sexual difference and his delight in finally finding, with Otoh, romance, is one of the book's weaker strands. Otoh was born a girl, but decides at the age of five to become a boy. The fact that this goes unremarked on, even by his parents, is more than a little surprising. The symmetry of boy-who-wants-to-be-a-girl meeting girl-who-willed-herself-to-be-a-boy is too neat.

These might seem rather literal-minded gripes in a book that is, if not magic realist, certainly magical. Perhaps they arise from the fact that Mootoo has commandeered a strange, new territory between the two, full of synchronicity, where the bizarre is made beautiful without resorting to magic. Either way, this sad, seductive story deserves to be read.

Ulster in his bones

Karl Miller

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by Seamus Heaney
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ONE winter's evening in the Ulster of 1976 some workmen were lined up beside their van by masked gunmen, who required that any Catholics among them should step forward. There was one. As he was about to step forward his hand was squeezed by a mate, who may have wanted him to know that the others would not betray him to the freedom fighters. All the Protestant workmen were then shot dead.

The story was told by Seamus Heaney in the course of the address he delivered in Stockholm, in 1995, when he received the Nobel Prize, and it is included in Opened Ground, which is a kind of Collected Poems. The story deserves its place in the book. These poems, 1966 to 1996, were composed during the wintering-out of a 30-years' war.

There are many sorts of poem here: love poems, family poems, farm poems, metaphysical poems, his ancient-grave poems, the medieval-modern outcast-king poems — his Sweeniad. There are poems by him that are out and could have been in. But it's good to find fully represented the ones which tell you there is a civil war going on.

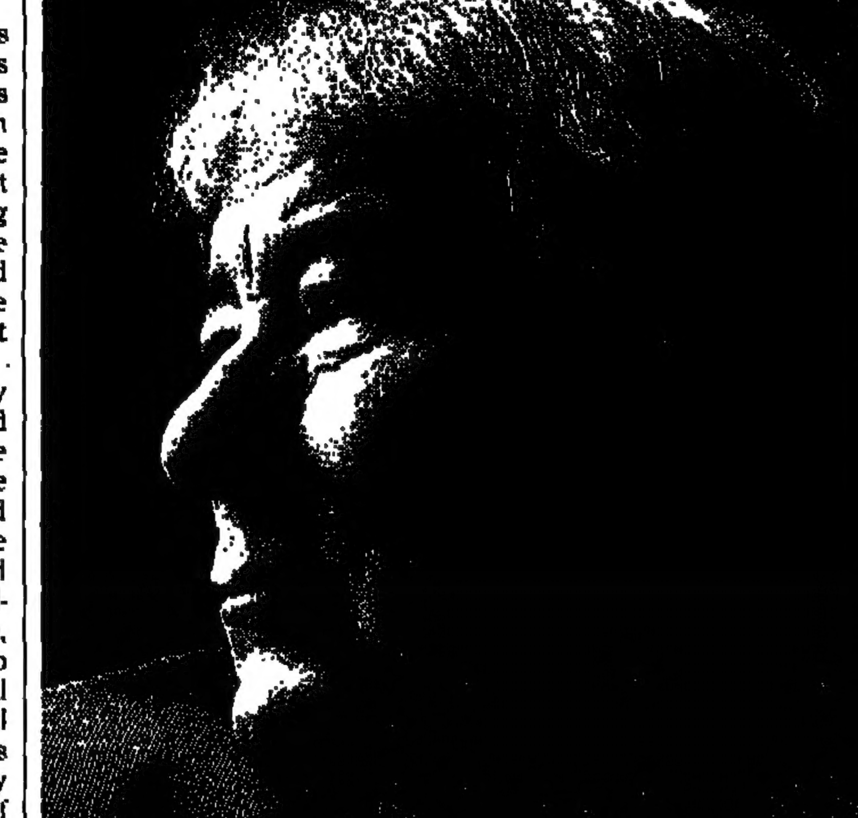
The strong contrast between the rural environment of his childhood and the world he was soon to enter — that of universities and the media, of podium and television studio — is another of the divisions which have helped to shape the achievement commemorated in this book. Off the farm he went, to places where the words and ways were different. Boundaries were crossed, and a language was created which tied together his various places.

The early celebrations of his first life, his country life, have at least as great a claim on the affection of his readers as anything else he has written. But it's also true that such retrospects were not outgrown; he keeps going back to Derry. "My last things will be first things slipping from me." The poem in which he watches his father digging, and which begins this book, grew to be a reference point for the poetry that followed.

The later stages of his poetry were to display a sophisticated scholarship. Here are some of the complex and cryptic poems of the modern world, of its academies and metropolitan centres. There were those at one time who reckoned that he should stick to being nostalgic and romantic, introspective, "personal". But he continued to write about Northern Ireland's civil war, a conflict that has resembled the small wars fought in Dante's internecine Middle Ages. Heaney turned to Dante in order to speak of the troubles of his native region, and Dante can sometimes seem to have served as his Virgil in leading him towards the vernacular plainness and spareness that was to become a feature of his verse.

Heaney has written some of his best poetry about Ulster's troubles, to which he has been and remains intimately exposed. A relative and a close friend have been killed, and he was himself in danger when the rage was at its worst. He is a Northern Catholic who no longer lives in the North. He was eventually to cast himself as a composer of Tristia, like the exiled Ovid. But not even by halves is he an exile.

He said in Stockholm that "while the Christian moralist in oneself" had been "impelled to deplore" the IRA's atrocities, he had felt that there had to be change in Northern Ireland. But he had also felt that "the very brutality of the means by which the IRA was pursuing change was destructive of the trust upon which new possibilities would have to be based".



Seamus Heaney . . . balancing act — PHOTOGRAPH: DECLAN SHANAHAN

Heaney has been blamed for not taking sides, for not joining up. In another sense, there has never been any doubt as to what side he belongs to. "My wronged people" does not refer to Protestant Ulster. Nor, however, does it refer to the Provisional IRA.

In a late poem he has written of:

This principle of bearing, bearing
up
And bearing out, just having to
Balance the intolerable in others
Against our own . . .

Bearing and balancing may also be at issue in an earlier poem, published in Station Island (1984). A dead man appears to him, as the dead do in Dante, and is asked by the poet in self-reproach: Forgive the way I have lived indifferent — forgive my timid circumspect involvement.

This man is William Strathearn, a shopkeeper who returns from the grave to tell the story of his murder in one of the least indifferent pieces of verse that Heaney has written. Strathearn is questioned by his wife:

"Who are they anyway at this hour
of the night?"
"I know them to see," I said, but
something made me reach and
squeeze her hand across the bed
before I went downstairs into the
aisle of the shop.

To order the paperback of Opened Ground for £10 contact CultureShop

Trapped in a complex moral maze

Adam Mars-Jones

Amsterdam
by Ian McEwan
Cape 176pp £14.99

IAN McEWAN'S new novel, almost short enough to qualify as a novella, is a puzzling mixture of old themes revisited and a latent sourness of tone. This writer's eye has never been exactly indulgent, and there is a familiar relishable exactness about passages that describe, say, a hike in the Lake District on which the landscape fails to work its magic, resembling instead "a gigantic brown gymnasium". But as the story moves towards an uncharacteristically contrived climax, it can seem that the author is simply dismissing the creatures he has conjured up, and tying up his story with a sardonically, even a derisively, neat bow.

The early parts of Amsterdam seem to promise engagement with McEwan preoccupations such as the tragic precariousness of rationality, the futile human tendency to favour selfish interest over the group, the short term over the long; but this is almost a red herring. McEwan has always enjoyed posing dilemmas for his characters, and even setting traps for them, but the dilemmas in the new book are balder, and the punishments he metes out for failure less humane.

In the striking opening section of his last novel, Enduring Love, for instance, the hero was confronted with a quandary of the most urgent sort, namely whether to let go of a rope attached to a passenger-carrying balloon threatened by a high wind, and if so, when.

Set-piece dilemmas recur at two vital points in Amsterdam, and if they don't constitute the plot, they certainly power it. Again McEwan's characters must choose between their selfish preoccupations and the interests of a wider community. Should a newspaper editor print compromising photographs of a family-values Cabinet minister, when he is motivated by spite and scoop-lust rather than authentic disapproval? Is a composer in the full flood of creation, head brimming with ideas that will evaporate unless notated, justified in ignoring a merely human cry for help?

There was a time in McEwan's early fiction when the reader had no feeling that the characters were being measured against a code of conduct; more that the author was letting his creatures follow their own innocent or perverse logic. Moral judgments were studiously withheld. Then there began, above all in The Child In Time, the invoking of certain values, particularly the decommissioning of the male ego in favour of a new personality attuned to women and children. By the time of Black Dogs, two moralities were pitted against each other, even if the dice were loaded in favour of one, the less materialist one.

As time passes, the traps McEwan lays for his creatures become less arbitrary (as they were in, say, The Comfort Of Strangers) and more stringent, more philosophically loaded. The hero of The Innocent is required by the fiction that encloses him to perform an act that is only physically, and not morally, repellent (cutting up and disposing of the body of a worthless human being whose death isn't his fault), but the taboos he breaks destroy the love relationship he was trying to protect. The hero of Enduring Love implicates himself in a death by letting go of a rope, and spends the rest of the novel trying to come to terms with what this abandonment means.

In Amsterdam McEwan has two main characters, long-standing friends who were both, at different times, lovers of a woman who has just died. If McEwan seems more sympathetic to Clive the composer, or at least to his work life, with its combination of obsessional attentiveness to detail and aspiration to hugeness of utterance, than to Vernon the newspaper editor, struggling to steer his crisis-stricken broadsheet downmarket without seeming to do so, he compensates by giving Vernon a little more self-awareness.

In the two rudimentary moral mazes he constructs for these characters, the author seems to leave a clear thread, indicating the right course of action and all but garrottes them with it subsequently. Both men suffer not only shame: they also lose by their actions, in worldly terms. They lose what they sought to gain, and still there is more punishment in store.

But if there is a moral perspective almost too much in evidence in this latest novel, there is also a contrary force. In his earliest writing McEwan seemed attracted by the genre of black farce, and gained a reputation for heartlessness that he then spent some years dispelling. Now, particularly towards the end of Amsterdam, he seems almost to be seeking a return to the fold of black sheep. But McEwan's literary personality is too cool to allow for actual satire — even when he is pushing his book to its extreme conclusion he can't bring himself to let go. In Amsterdam he can at least boast the satirist's disaffection with his creatures, but perhaps he lacks the mysterious enzyme by which rage is metabolised as relish.

Paperbacks
Desmond Christy

Viagra: The Virility Solution, by Steven Lamm, MD, and Gerald Secor Couzens (Pocket Books, £7.99)

GENTLEMEN, if you are not potent now you could be anxious after a few chapters of this little volume. Fortunately, the book (which has to be swallowed with a good dose of Viagra) points the way to restoring full sexual function, enhancing endurance, bolstering self-confidence and identifying substances that help (fish, tea) or hinder (fags and booze) the work of the pill. I'd tell you more but I must rush off to my "virility exercises".

The Kennedy Tapes: Inside The White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis, ed Ernest R May and Philip D Zelikov (Harvard, £10.50)

A GRIPPING addition to one of the most studied events in world history. President Kennedy gets high marks from the editors of his tapes, especially for his behaviour on October 27, 1962: "He remains calm, lucid, and is consistently a step, or several steps, ahead of his advisers. He is the only one in the room who is determined not to go to war over obsolete missiles in Turkey . . ." Whoops, apocalypse was all too likely a possibility.

The World of the Castrati: The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon, by Patrick Barbier (Souvenir, £12.99)

"*HOW* can the 'modern' mind," asks Barbier, "understand how a particular period dared seek pure and 'gratuitous' beauty through a mutilation so 'costly' to the individual who was subjected to it?" When people expressed sympathy for them, some castrati burst out laughing. There were worse things in life. And if you were lucky you might sound like an angel and make your fortune, as the man with the knife probably promised.

John Tavener: Glimpses of Paradise, by Geoffrey Haydon (Indigo, £7.99)

JUST as there are those who regret that Gerard Manley Hopkins turned to Catholicism, so there are those who think that Tavener might be a better composer had he not been received into the Orthodox Church. But a biography of either man shows that those who embark on spiritual journeys don't feel they have much choice about where they end up. Haydon's sympathetic biography ends, with a fading orchestral drone, in 1996. Princess Di's contribution to Tavener's fame will have to wait for a later edition.

In a heaven full of pennies

Peter Preston

Dennis Potter: The Authorised Biography
by Humphrey Carpenter
Faber 544pp £20

CONSIDER, as the carousel of coincidence spins, two Oxford graduates from decades past. Both came from poor, relentlessly deprived homes. Both scrambled up the ladder of escape called Education. Both, with wondrous eloquence, achieved fame, then notoriety. Both may be remembered as much their for their sexual hang-ups and mendacities as for their achievements. What is the difference between Bill Clinton and Dennis Potter?

One question; two answers. First, and most obviously, that Potter's gropings and lustings are part of the making of his reputation, while Clinton's are the destruction of his. But second, and perhaps more cynically, that the president rarely talks about his roots in hardship, while Potter talked and wrote of little else.

Clinton, boondocks raised by a single mum, making his way on talent and gut determination, could play that tale for sympathy in every scrape. It is, after all, the American dream. He doesn't, though. He finds it inappropriate. Yet there was never a moment during Potter's neon career when such a modest thought would have entered his head.

Dennis Potter — PHOTO: JANE BOWN

You can't be neutral about the Potter plays, or the man himself. I am not a neutral. I was at university with him, part of an adjacent media set. I thought him, even then, a firework and a confection.

Is it fair, so long after juvenile events, to remember his Union speeches, the torrents of invective and class rhetoric and alliteration pouring into a whirlpool of emotionalism? It is, because they were always the same. Heard one, heard the lot. Is it fair to remember his editorship of Isis and the column of vitriol called (modestly) "Potter"? Yes. Been there once; read that before. Repetition was the mother of Potter invention.

As ruckus follows ruckus, Humphrey Carpenter is beginning to seem the Kitty Kelley of authorised biography. His defect is that he lacks an overall view, a thesis that makes sense of his subject. His virtue is that he toils mightily. He puts in the bits that don't fit as well.

Thus he quotes Potter off to Oxford, turning his back on the Forest of Dean. "I wanted to struggle out of the carefully wrapped cocoon of loyalties and sentiments. A potential Joe Lampton, without the remorse". Potter already thought of himself as a character from a novel.

Is this the "deeply shy and reclusive" chap Carpenter holds up for our examination? Very few of the early bits fit at all — and there's a tendency to manufacture episodes from his life to fit the image of self-romanticism. He brings his local girl up to Oxford to meet his friends and writes that she was "made to feel like a private in the officers' mess". Garbage, say the friends: opportunism and exploitation. Later, when psoriasis and arthritis seize him, he writes about his left knee, suddenly "the size of a soccer ball, bulging against my trousers". Garbage, with medical records to prove it.

In other words, Potter made things up or left things out. And once you realise that, you wonder what other self-spins he doctored. Even the sensation of his 1993 MacTaggart Lecture — I was "abused out of innocence" at 10 by "an adult's sexual appetite" — diminishes in another telling to "the smallest interference" by fumbling, wracked Uncle Ernie. "It was the drink, you know, and it didn't happen all that often."

The inevitable problem is how much any of this stuff matters. He could have been a brilliant journalist (his TV reviews for the Daily Herald seared the page). He was electric, and a brave man battling a foul illness. He became the television playwright of his generation who everyone thinks of first. Pennies From Heaven and The Singing Detective belong in any 20th century archive. Writers are always building their own special worlds. Why worry about Potter's?

The difficulty is that Carpenter invites us to worry; indeed, makes it unavoidable. The confected reality is supposed to shape our reality. And, because he has no grasp of what was really stunning about Potter — the few times, such as The Singing Detective, when he was disciplined enough to turn his experience of a pain he did not need to confect into a shriek of humanity — Carpenter is forced to plough through the lesser canon as though it had anything to offer.

Dennis Potter possessed a narrow gift. He had neither the warmth of Alan Bleasdale, nor the control of John Hopkins. He was Dylan Thomas and Bernard Levin out for a night at a strip club. He does not survive 666 pages of Carpenter because their sheer omnivorousness diminishes him. The talk of prostitutes and flings demeans the central relationship with a wife who loved him and a family which cherishes his memory. Poor, sad Uncle Ernie.

He deserves to be remembered for the shock of the new, for a finite output which was raw and fresh, and for his courage. That last interview with Melvyn Bragg was magnificent. He has his place in a heaven full of pennies. The rest (like Monica: My True Story) is not history and is best left unread.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £16 contact CultureShop (see page 28)

Single moment of passion

Christina Patterson

Cereus Blooms at Night
by Shani Mootoo
Granta 272pp £14.99

NOT many writers have the nerve to set their first novel in Paradise. In the case of Shani Mootoo, whose debut was shortlisted for all the major literary prizes in Canada, it's the name of a small Caribbean town. As the horrifying story unfolds, it proves to be a hothouse of secrets, cruelties and Hardyesque missed opportunities, a Paradise which is, of course, heavily and increasingly ironic.

The tale is told by Tyler, the only gay male nurse on the island of Lantanacamara. His arrival at the Paradise Almshouse coincides with a major local scandal. Three weeks later, the source of it, a skeletal, bird-like old woman strapped to a stretcher and smelling of "rich vegetable compost" is delivered to the almshouse. Tyler feels a strange empathy for the old woman with clenched fists. Under his loving care, Mala Ramchandin begins to calm down. Her mad wailing is replaced by perfect imitations of birds and, finally, by speech. From her diffuse ramblings and the stories of her only regular visitors, Ambrose and his beautiful son Otoh, Tyler is gradually able to piece her story together.

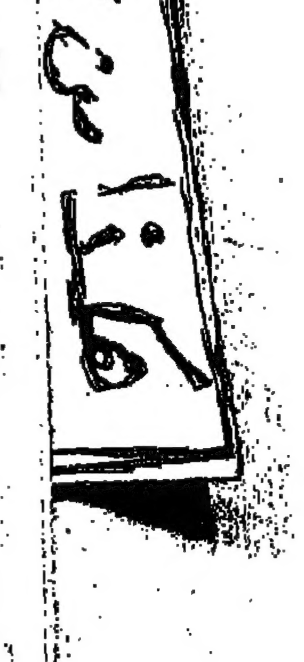
Halfway through his childhood, Mala's father, Chandin, son of indentured labourers from India, is adopted by white missionaries. He learns to strut, sport white linen and speak in pompous polysyllables. He also falls in love with his adoptive sister, Lavinia. When his love is thwarted, he marries her Asian friend Sarah and they have two daughters, Pohpoh (Mala's childhood name) and Asha. All four are delighted when Lavinia, returning from abroad, becomes a regular visitor, but one day Chandin returns to the house just as Sarah and Lavinia are about to elope. As he surveys the empty home, the carriage draws away, leaving the girls to a lifetime of revenge from a father mad with rage and grief.

As in practically every other novel published at the moment, this takes the form of sexual abuse. Faced with rape at home and bullying at school, Pohpoh finds solace in nature. She hides in hedgerows and makes a habit of collecting and protecting snails. Her sister runs away, but nobody knows what's happened to her father until Otoh, the first visitor for 10 years to her collapsing, rotting, home, encounters an overwhelming stench from a downstairs room.

This might sound a bit like Miss Haversham meets William Burroughs, but it's actually rather beautiful and moving. Shani Mootoo writes with great precision and strength. As you might expect of a poet, she's strong on symbolism, too. The central image is the cereus plant, which blooms for one night only, releasing its heady dual scent, "one a vanilla-like sweetness, the other a curdling". This reflects Mala's life, a single experience of passion, followed by decay. It also suggests a Paradise Lost, where beauty is doomed to be destroyed, cruelty and despair to flourish.

Tyler is a self-conscious narrator whose own story keeps bursting through. The pressure of his sexual difference and his delight in finally finding, with Otoh, romance, is one of the book's weaker strands. Otoh was born a girl, but decides at the age of five to become a boy. The fact that this goes unremarked on, even by his parents, is more than a little surprising. The symmetry of boy-who-wants-to-be-a-girl meeting girl-who-willed-herself-to-be-a-boy is too neat.

These might seem rather literal-minded gripes in a book that is, if not magic realist, certainly magical. Perhaps they arise from the fact that Mootoo has commandeered a strange, new territory between the two, full of synchronicity, where the bizarre is made beautiful without resorting to magic. Either way, this sad, seductive story deserves to be read.



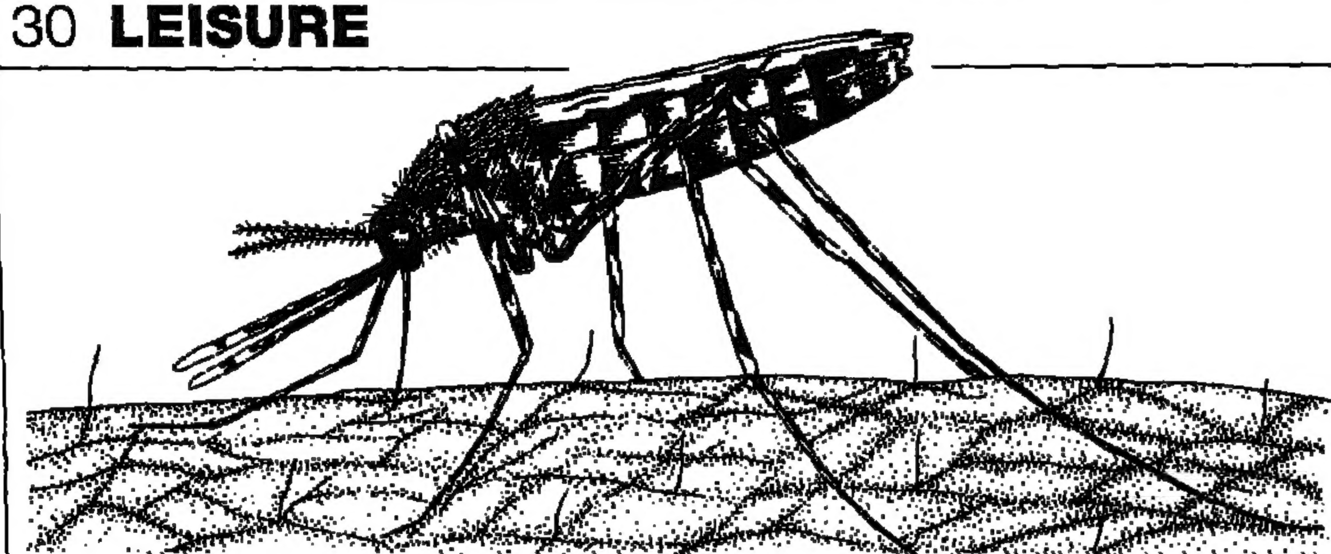


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Deadly pact signed in blood

Mark Cocker

THROUGH a hand lens the beast looks more revolting than ever: a fly's compound eyes, a dark thorax from which spread the long gravity-defying legs that glue it to the ceiling, and a translucent abdomen swollen with blood — my blood. But on any mosquito it is the proboscis that commands my most morbid fascination.

Although it looks like a single stiletto blade, the proboscis is actually a complex with nine different parts. On each side there are two sensitive palpi which initially feel around for a nice tender part to penetrate.

Within the sheath-like proboscis, known as the labium, are four stylets toothed at the tip, which puncture the surface. As these go in so the labium is drawn back and the stylets pushed in and out until they locate and rupture a capillary.

Then down a tube called the hypopharynx goes saliva to mix and dilute the blood — and in some species to act as an anti-coagulant — while pumps located in the mosquito's foregut draw the liquid up through another channel known as the labrum.

In Europe they are now no more than a nuisance, but the mosquito and its extraordinary feeding habits have probably done more to shape the course of its post-glacial ecological history than any other insect species, except perhaps the honey bee.

The *Plasmodium protozoans*, which are the cause of the human form of malaria, are borne only by Anopheles mosquitoes. And as our blood is sucked up through the creature's labrum, so the malaria passes down the hypopharynx with the insect's saliva. One entomologist suggested that this fluid "closed the continent of Africa for countless centuries to civilisation, and . . . played a dominant part in destroying the civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome".

Although the significance of malaria in the decline of classical civilisation is questioned, it had a constant devastating impact in the Middle Ages, until quinine was brought back to Europe in the 17th century. One historian described it as "the background to Mediterranean pathology". Elsewhere in the world, the mosquito's resistance to insecticides such as DDT and the capacity of the *Plasmodium* organisms to circumvent antimalarial drugs still means that the disease infects about 100 million victims and kills at least 1 per cent of these annually.

Even in temperate areas like Britain malaria recurred as recently as the second world war, when soldiers from tropical theatres of conflict reintroduced the infection to our own five species of Anopheles mosquito. In previous centuries the illness was endemic among the inhabitants of southeastern England, especially in the Broads and the Fens of East Anglia.

Usually it was the benign tertian form of malaria, known then as the "ague", which marshmen discussed with the complacent approach that we have towards the common cold. Yet its recurrent fevers could still make serious inroads into the health and economic well-being of many communities and affected people as far north as the Highlands of Scotland.

Setting aside for a moment the health horrors associated with the insects, I sense there is something almost poetic about a mosquito's lifecycle.

Each bite by a breeding female expresses in the most succinct fashion a complex of associations centred on blood, death and rebirth. The mosquito is a powerful symbol for the intricate connections between the macro- and micro-worlds, and it carries an additional humbling message about the irrelevance and powerlessness of the individual organism in the larger, self-balancing machinery of nature.

But enough of this metaphysics and also of that bloodsucker's treacherous whining. Time to roll up my copy of the Guardian Weekly and put it to good use.

Chess Leonard Barden

SOME 400 players competed in chess events at this month's Mind Sports Olympiad, at time limits from 5 to 30 minutes per game. Five women from the Kiev grandmaster school were surprise entrants; WGM Inna Yanovska won the five-minute gold medal, while her colleagues achieved telling victories against the English male GMs. The Ukrainians were the only players who, after each rapidplay game, wrote down the moves from memory on a scoresheet ready for a later post-mortem.

GM Stuart Conquest won the main prize of a British Airways round-the-world ticket as his forcing tactics wrapped up some quick wins:

S Conquest v J Friedland

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Rg1 Planning to advance g4-g5 faster than via the English Attack Be3 and f3. Black's best answer is h6. **g6 7 g4 Bg7 8 g5 Nfd7 9 Be3 b5 10 a3 Bb7 11 h4 Nc5 12 h5! gxh5.**

12 . . . Nxe4 is risky due to 13 Nxe4 Bxe4 14 h6! Bf8(Be5 15 f4) 15 Ne6! and 16 Qd4. **13 Qxh5 Nxe4?** Losing instantly. Since Qd7 fails to 14 Bh3 and b4, Black has to settle for the ugly Bc8.

14 Nxe4 Bxe4 15 Ne6! Qa5+ 16 Bd2 b4 17 Nxg7+ Kf8 18 Bxb4 Qd5 19 Qh6 Resigns.

Speed chess has its special features, caused mainly by the spectre of having to make an infinite number of moves in almost zero time.

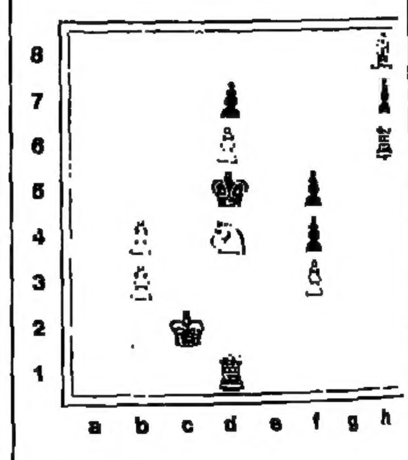
Anna Zozulia v Murugan Thiruchelvam

The nine-year-old had held his own with the European girls U18 silver medallist, and offered a draw in the diagram above. Zozulia, half a minute better on the clock, declined, so Murugan called the arbiter who correctly postponed a decision because threefold repetition has to be confirmed by a written score sheet.

The players were so absorbed in the draw discussion that both failed to notice that Black has two instant wins, by 1 . . . Kg8 and by 1 . . . R8e6+ 2 Kf7 Rf6 mate. Instead he went 1 . . . **R5e6+?** when White can cause problems by 2 Kf7! setting the trap 2 . . . R8e7+ 3 Kf8 b3? 4 Qxg7+! and stalemate.

Zozulia had mentally settled for half a point so retreated 2 Kf5? **Re5+ 3 Kg6** (3 Kf4 Re4+ is a won pawn ending) when Black finally noticed **3 . . . Kg8** and went on to win. If the white pawn was on b3 instead of b2 then 3 . . . Kg8? would allow another stalemate by 4 Qxe5!

No 2541



White mates in three moves against any defence (by F Giegold). Fritz Giegold specialised in apparently simple problem settings with startling answers.

No 2540: 1 . . . Bh5 2 h7 Rc3+ 3 Kd4(3 Kf4 Rf3 mate) c5+ 4 Kd5 Nf6+ 5 Bxf6 Bf3 mate.

Quick crossword no. 436

Across

1 Lure (4)
3 A celebration of age! (8)
8 Manage — an investment! (4)
9 Event (8)
11 Parapet (10)
14 Observe — a review (6)
15 East European — may be French! (6)
17 Recuperate (10)
20 Blameworthy (8)
21 Shy — actors (4)
22 Naughtiness (8)
23 Eager — to lament (4)

Down

1 Spine (8)
2 Rude (8)
4 Disregard (6)
5 Under-developed countries (5,5)
6 Eating regime — council (4)
7 Abominable snowman (4)
10 Violent deranged person (10)
12 Deter (8)
13 To menace (8)
16 Develop (6)
18 Dross (4)
19 Unfortunately (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

WHEREAS the Bermuda Bowl is open only to those teams who have qualified from zonal competitions such as the European Championships or the United States Trials, the Rosenblum Trophy is open to all comers. This year, the Rosenblum was held in Lille in northern France, and it was won in very convincing style by the Italian team of Lauria, Versace, Buratti, Lanzarotti, Sementa and Angelini. They dominated the final against a powerful Brazilian squad led by Gabriel Chagas to such an extent that the match was over as a contest by the half way stage.

The British team of Tony Forrester, Paul, Jason and Justin Hackett, and David Mossop were eliminated in dramatic fashion at the quarter-final stage by a Swedish team. The result of the match depended on the very last deal — take the South cards and see if you can find a way home in four hearts:

The auctions were identical at both tables:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♣	2♦
2♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

North
♠ K Q 10 4
♥ A 8 3
♦ Q
♣ A K 10 5 2

West
♠ 8 5 3 2
♥ K Q 10 4
♦ 7 6 2
♣ 4 3

East
♠ A 7 6
♥ 2
♦ K 10 9 8 5 3
♣ 9 7 6

South
♠ J 9
♥ J 9 7 6 5
♦ A J 4
♣ Q J 8

If either pair had managed to find a way to the greatly superior contract of 3NT, there would have been no story. But both South players had to tackle the inferior game on the lead of a diamond to dummy's queen, East's king and declarer's ace. How would you continue?

Taking the trump suit in isolation, there is a safety play to restrict your losers to two tricks even when West has KQ10x. The idea is to lead a low card from dummy to the nine in the South hand and the ten from West, then run the jack on the next round (unless West covers it, of course). But there are other considerations, and the British South adopted the reasonable line of ruffing a diamond in dummy and playing the ace and another heart. When the trump suit proved to contain three losers, he had to go one down.

Fredin for Sweden started on a more promising tack. After winning the ace of diamonds, he played a spade to dummy's king, and it seemed to the audience that he would establish a spade trick in dummy to take care of his losing diamond, then be in a position to handle the trumps for just two losers. But Fredin did not play a second spade at trick three — instead, he embarked prematurely on the trump suit by leading a low card from dummy to the nine in his hand. West won the trick with the ten and continued diamonds. Winning with the jack, Fredin pursued the correct line in trumps by leading the jack from his hand. But because he still had a losing diamond, West could defeat the contract at this point by refusing to cover the jack of hearts, since dummy could then be forced to ruff a diamond with the ace. To the despair of the British supporters, West reflexively covered the jack of hearts, the contract was made, and Sweden rather than Britain went through to the semi-finals.

Sports Diary Mike Kiely

Allegations of bribery still haunt Wasim

WITH Axa League and NatWest Trophy titles under his belt already and the chances of adding the Britannic Assurance County Championship to complete a glorious treble triumph for Lancashire this season, you would think life must be a bed of roses for skipper Wasim Akram.

And so it was . . . until the issue of match-fixing allegations once again raised its ugly head in the wake of a report by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), which has recommended that Wasim, together with Salim Malik and Ijaz Ahmed, be suspended from Test cricket while investigations continue.

Wasim countered by claiming there was a conspiracy against him: "I will not let my enemies destroy me . . . it is a one-sided story and should not have come out like this. The allegations are baseless."

Allegations of bribery in Pakistani cricket first arose in 1994 after Australians Shane Warne, Tim May and Mark Waugh claimed they had been approached by Malik to play badly in a Test match for money.

Meanwhile Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan has confirmed he will be joining Lancashire as their overseas player for next season, replacing Wasim.

WHILE the colourful opening ceremony in Kuala Lumpur that heralded the start of the XVIth Commonwealth Games distracted many people's attention, in Johannesburg Britain's Iwan Thomas added the World Cup 400m title to the European and British AAA titles he has already picked up this year. The stage is now set for the young Welshman to complete what has been a remarkable season by taking the Commonwealth title.

THE drug scandal that plagued this year's Tour de France continued to haunt cycling as the organisers of the Tour of Spain found all the headlines being made off the road. The publication of police transcripts of interviews with members of the Festina team disqualified from the Tour de France after drug allegations, including Alex Zülle of Switzerland and Richard Virenque who are currently competing in Spain, included details of how the banned hormone erythropoietin (EPO) was taken. Meanwhile Credit Agricole's British cyclist Chris Boardman pulled out of the Spanish event, saying he had not "wanted to go in the first place but I had to follow team orders".

Zülle: dogged by controversy

SCOTLAND'S Colin Montgomerie picked up a cheque for $209,000 after winning the One 2 One British Masters by one shot at Forest of Arden. Montgomerie's winnings keeps him in third place in the Order of Merit behind leader Lee Westwood and Darren Clarke.

AT THE FISA World Rowing Championships in Cologne, coxless fours reigning champions Britain, in the shape of Steve Redgrave, James Cracknell, Tim Foster and Matthew Pinsett, retained their title. As at last year's world championships, Germany finished top of the medals chart with five golds and five silvers. Italy joined Britain on three golds followed by the United States and Australia with two apiece.

SPANISH national coach Javier Clemente, who followed up the indignity of an early World cup exit with a 3-2 defeat by Cyprus in the first of his country's European Championship qualifiers, handed in his resignation. Germany's Berti Vogts also called it a day, to be replaced by former Bayern Munich coach Erich Ribbeck. Another early casualty of the Euro 2000 qualifiers was Bulgaria's Hristo Bonev, who felt he could not go on after his team went down 3-0 to Poland.

Shiv Sharma is on holiday

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: [illegible] Villa 2, Wimbledon 0; Charlton 1, Derby 2; Chelsea 2, Nottm For 1; Everton 0, Leeds 0; Leicester 1, Arsenal 1; Man Utd 2, Coventry 0; Newcastle 4, Southmptn 0; Sheff Wed 3, Blackburn 0; Tottenham 0, Middlsbro 3; West Ham 2, Liverpool 1.

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE:
First Division: [illegible] 3, Birmnghm 1; Bradford C 2, Sheff Utd 2; Bristol City 1, WBA 3; Crystal Pal 0, Port Vale 1; Grimsby 1, Barnsley 2; Norwich 0, Bury [illegible]; Oxford 3, Ipswich 3; Portsmth 5, Swindon 2; Stockport 1, Crewe 1; Watford 2, QPR 1; [illegible] 1, Sunderlnd 1.

Second Division: Bournemth 1, Wigan 0; Burnley 1, Wycombe 1; Chesterfld 0, Walsall 1; Colchester 1, Gillnghm 1; Lincoln 1, Blackpool 2; Luton 2, Bristol R 0, Macclesfld 0, Man City 1; Northmptn 1, Oldham 1; Notts Co 1, Fulham [illegible]; Preston 4, Reading 0; Stoke 1, Millwall 0; [illegible] 1, Wrexham 1.

Third Division: [illegible] 4, Hull 1; Brentford 0, Rotherham 3; Brighton 0, Southend 2; Cambridge 1, Leyton Orient 0; Chester 2, Torquay 0, Hartlepool 4, Exeter 3; Mansfield 1, Carlisle 1; Plymouth 1, Darlington 2; Rochdale 2, Sc'thorpe 2; Shrewsbry 1, Peterboro 1; Swansea 2, Scarboro 0.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Aberdeen 1, Motherwell 1; Celtic 1, Kilmarnock 1; Dundee United 0, Rangers 0; Hearts 0, Dundee 2; St Johnstone 1, Dunfirmline 1.

Division One: Airdrie 0, Morton 1; Clydebank 0, Ayr 1; Raith 1, Falkirk 1; St Mirren 2, Hibernian 0; Stranraer 2, Hamilton 1.

Division Two: Alloa 3, Clyde 0; Forfar 1, East Fife 2; Livingston 2, Arbroath 1; Partick 1, Stirling A 0; Inverness 3, Queen Sth 2.

Division Three: Brechin 0, Dumbarton 0; Cowdnbth 1, Berwick 1; E Stirling 0, Albion 1; Queens Pk 4, Ross Co 2; Stenhsmr 4, Montrose 0.

Motor Racing Italian Grand Prix

Schumacher fights to finish

Alan Henry at Monza

MICHAEL Schumacher set up a grandstand finish for the title by producing the precious victory that 125,000 *tifosi* had dreamed of in the Italian Grand Prix here last Sunday.

After the McLaren-Mercedes drivers Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard hit technical trouble, the German surged home to head the second Ferrari one-two of the season, Eddie Irvine finishing 37 seconds behind him.

The Ferrari drivers were joined on the podium by Michael's younger brother Ralf, who finished a strong third in his Jordan-Honda.

The Ferrari team leader now goes into the penultimate round of the championship, the Luxembourg Grand Prix at the Nürburgring on September 27, tied on 80 points with Hakkinen, who struggled home fourth after an eventful 53 laps on this high-speed track.

"After our poor performance at Hockenheim, which is also a low down-force circuit, we thought Monza would be very difficult for us," said Schumacher. "But all the hard work paid off today. Now I am looking forward to the Nürburgring and Suzuka, as both circuits should suit our car."

Even after Schumacher had secured his first pole position of the season here on Ferrari's home ground, it seemed he would be thwarted as the McLarens catapulted through from the second row to take first and second places. "My start was terrible," said Schumacher. "I got everything wrong. I was lucky to catch up Jacques [Villeneuve] in the second corner to get back behind Eddie and he let me by, which enabled me to catch up the McLarens."

Hakkinen, who had started in the spare car after an engine problem during the warm-up, immediately encountered a handling imbalance that obliged him to relinquish the lead to Coulthard after seven laps. Coulthard pulled steadily away only to stop with an engine failure which cast a pall of grey-blue across the circuit on the exit of the 130mph Curva Grande.

Hakkinen and Schumacher arrived to find the road apparently blocked by a smoke-screen. Having braked to near walking pace, the German dodged ahead of Hakkinen into the lead at the next chicane.

"The car was very strong, the chassis set-up working well, and then the engine tightened up as I came out of the first chicane and the engine blew," said Coulthard. "It was very disappointing because we had such a good car and a performance advantage at this circuit."

Schumacher edged away from Hakkinen with Irvine third ahead of Villeneuve, Ralf Schumacher and Alexander Wurz's Benetton.

Hakkinen had to struggle with his McLaren's handling imbalance until his routine refuelling stop at the end of lap 35, two laps after Schumacher made his stop. On fresh tyres the Finn's McLaren was clearly in better shape and he settled down to trim the leading Ferrari's advantage from six seconds on lap 36 to just over two seconds 10 laps later when he suddenly found himself pitched into a massive spin as he approached the second chicane.

The cause was a serious brake problem and he was lucky to escape intact as his car spun wildly across the gravel trap. He resumed still second, ahead of Irvine, but all chance of catching Schumacher's Ferrari had vanished. Merely surviving the dire handling, exacerbated by brake problems, became Hakkinen's priority. In the end he was grateful to get anything from the race.

Damon Hill, the winner in Belgium two weeks earlier, harnessed a two-stop strategy to vault through from 14th on the grid to sixth, putting both Jordans in the points for the second successive race.

Having failed to score a point prior to the ninth round, Jordan now have their sights on beating the old hands Williams and Benetton to third place in the constructors' championship. Their achievements underline how unpredictable the Formula One business can sometimes be, something which McLaren found to their cost here.

● Johnny Herbert will switch to Stewart-Ford for the 1999 Formula One season after three largely fruitless years with Sauber. Herbert has signed a two-year deal with the team, based in Milton Keynes in the UK.

Drivers' Championship

1	Hakkinen	
	M Schumacher	80 points
3	Coulthard	48
4	Irvine	38
5	Villeneuve	20
6	Wurz	
	Hill	17
8	Fisichella	15
9	R Schumacher	14
10	Frentzen	13

Cryptic crossword by Fawley

Across

1 An archaism? It will shortly appear so, when speech is reported (6)
5 Page with illustrations in publication appearing regularly (4-4)
9 Female film star, once in credit, appears more stylish (8)
10 Obtain compensation for serious injury (6)
11 Dispute previous decision — tessera ought to be realigned (5,3,4)
13,18 Mixed bits of Chinese meal (4,4)
14 Union resentment about sign of the affluent sector (2-6)
17 Vociferous about article editor rejected, showing some guts? (8)
18 See 13
20 Disconcert baby owl accidentally, and become very agitated (5,1,6)
23 Stir up possible cause for concern in broadsheet, briefly (6)
24 "Iona", and "Ness" used cryptically when appropriate? (2,6)
25 Regular date possible? Watch it! (6,2)
26 Reduce the effectiveness of a solution (6)

Down

2, 12 Planned carefully, so considered striking (4-7-3)
3 Missing philatelic item to be delivered COD? (9)
4 Unspecified object of certain activities (6)
5 Peter and Paul wrangling over debatable assertion? It may go on forever! (9,6)
6 Is it in the way, leading to fit of vexation? (4,4)
7 A grass often consumed with anger (5)
8, 22 Made an impression, given job for priority delivery (10,4)
12 See 2
15 Feel ill after dash round disreputable place for a cocktail (5,4)
16 Minor railway used by troops (8)
19 Somewhat uppity, out of pride, subaltern is suffering insults (6)
21 Works with over half of switchboard employees (5)
22 See 8

Last week's solution